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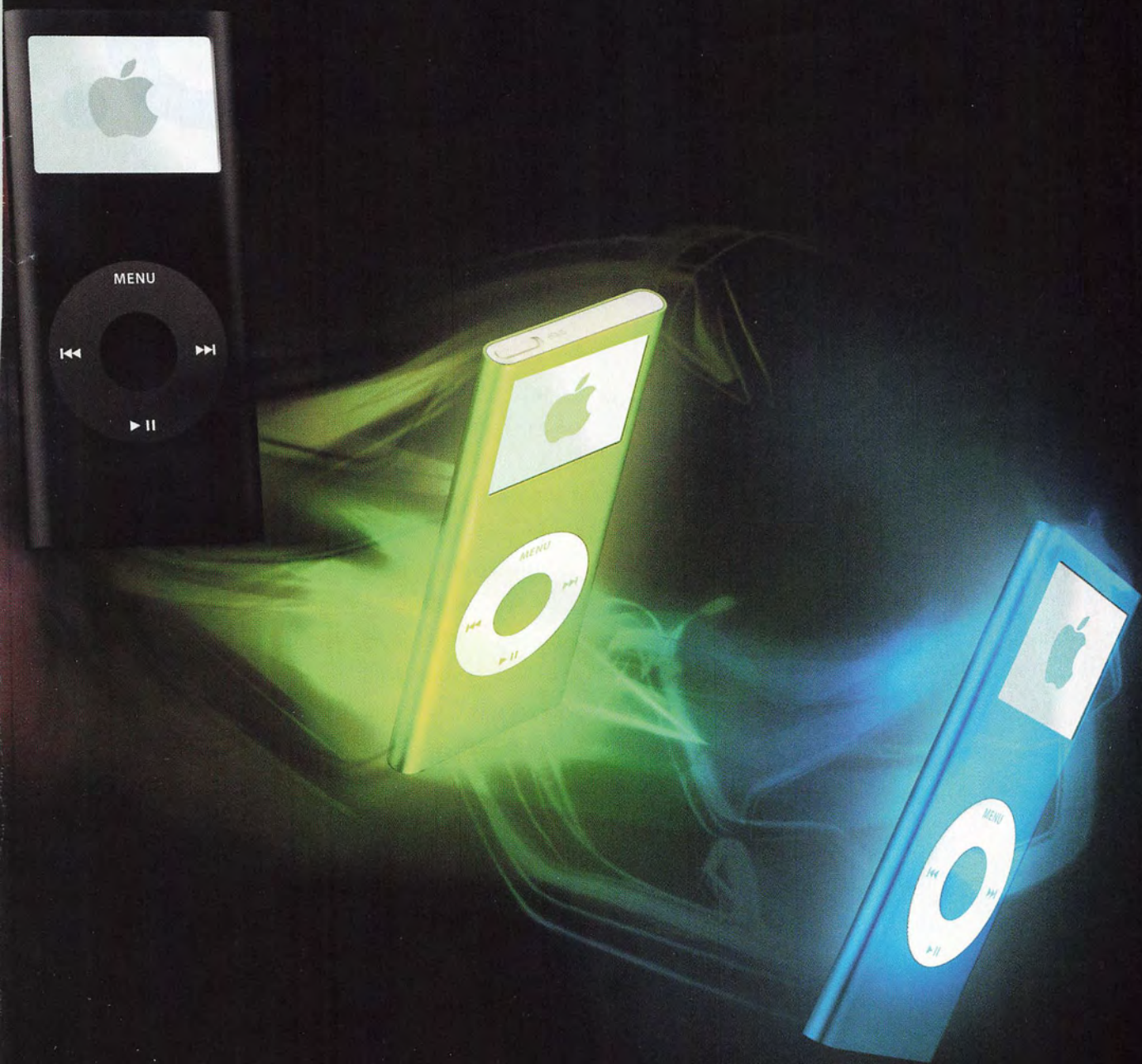
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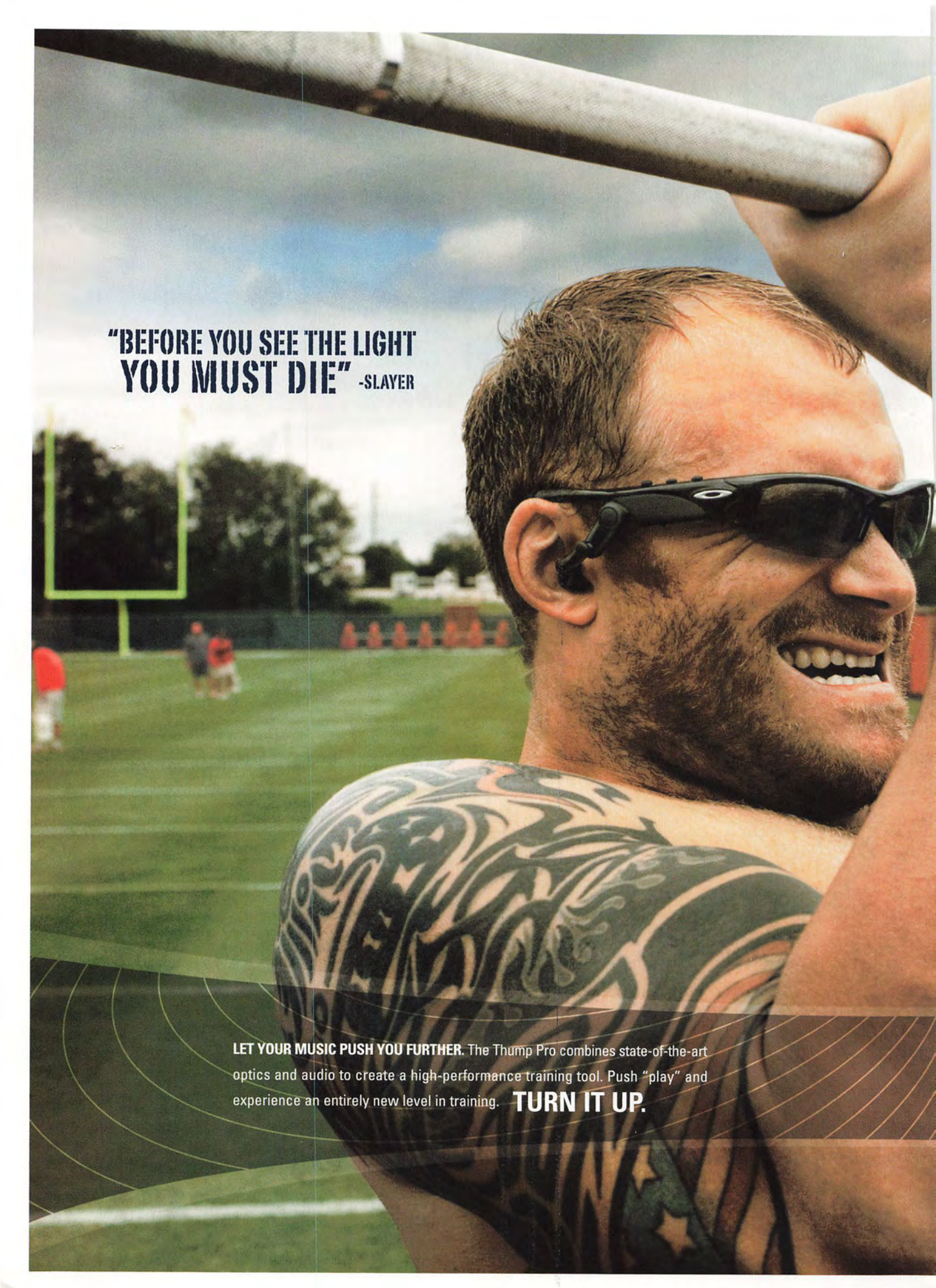
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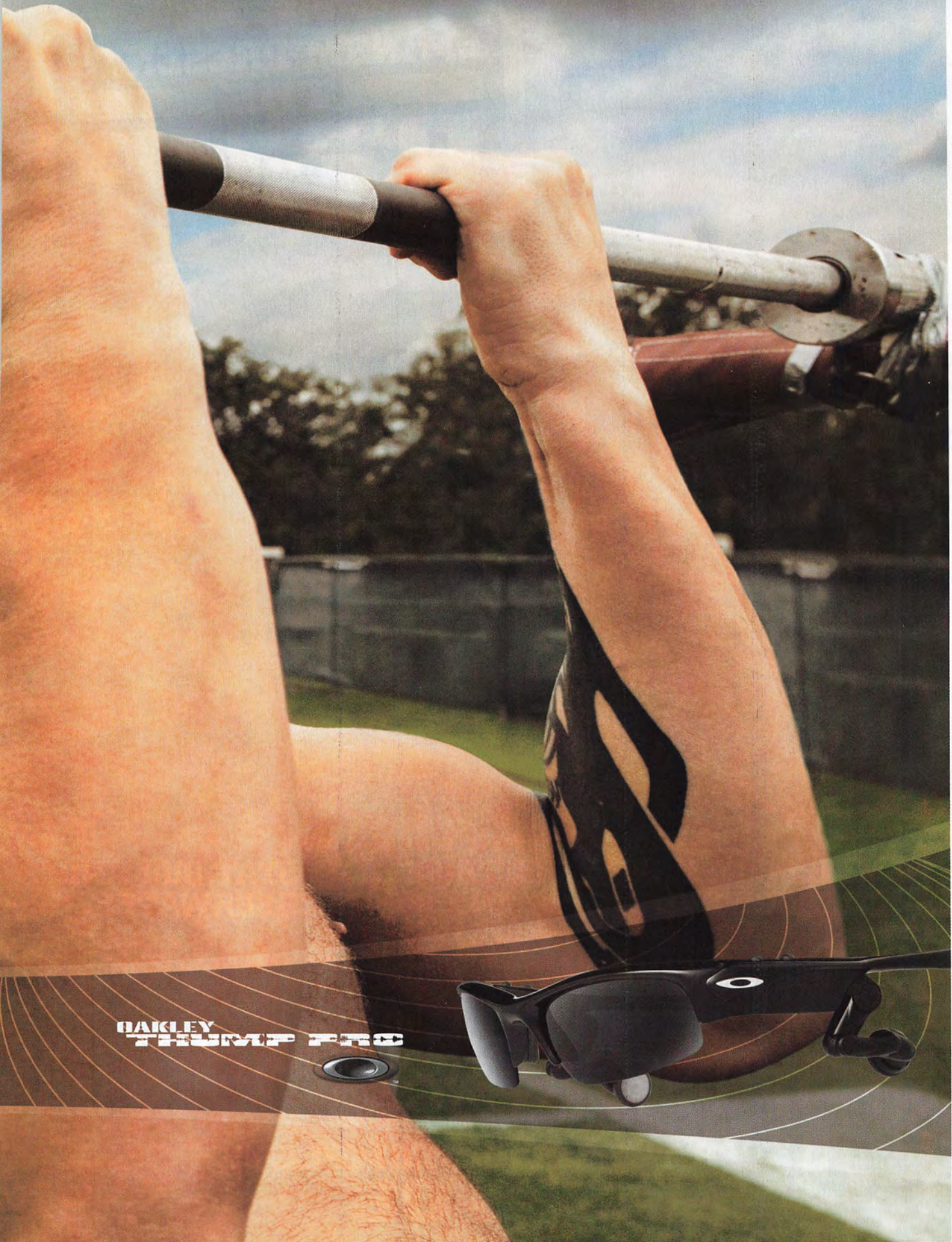
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"MALIBU'S A VERY HEALING PLACE."
COURTNEY LOVE



ON THE COVER

MY CHEMICAL ROMANCE

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARTIN SCHOELLER

STYLING: MARYAM MALAKPOUR FOR MARGARET MALDONADO AGENCY; SET DESIGN: MARGUERITE WADE FOR MARY HOWARD STUDIO; GROOMING: SEARON MCGRATTAN FOR MARGARET MALDONADO AGENCY; STYLING ASSISTANCE: HOLLAND INGERSOLL AND MOSES MORENO; GROOMING ASSISTANCE: COLETTE MORRALES; CLOTHING: FROM LEFT, BLUZZARD SHIRT, CLOAK, SUIT: JEAN PAUL GAULTIER; SHIRT AND JEANS: DIVER HOMME; SUIT: DOLCE & GABBANA; PANTS: J. LINDENBERG; LINDSAY LOHAN: CHRIS PIZZELLO; REUTHERS/CORBIS; AXI ROSE: MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA LTD; SPINE: (FREDDY FENDER): ED GELLER/RETNA LTD.

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The *Rock Star*: *Supernova* winner beat out thousands of contestants to be crowned lead singer. Now's the hard part: contending with legends like Tommy Lee and Gilby Clarke, selling records and escaping "lead singer disease."



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LUKAS ROSSI: KENNETH CAPPELLO; THE DOORS: HENRY DILTZ/CORBIS; JARED LETO: DOUG INGLISH; AXI ROSE: ZACH COBURN; JERRY LEE LEWIS: BETTMANN/CORBIS; PAMI ANDERSON AND KID ROCK: RAMEY PHOTO

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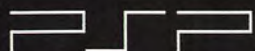


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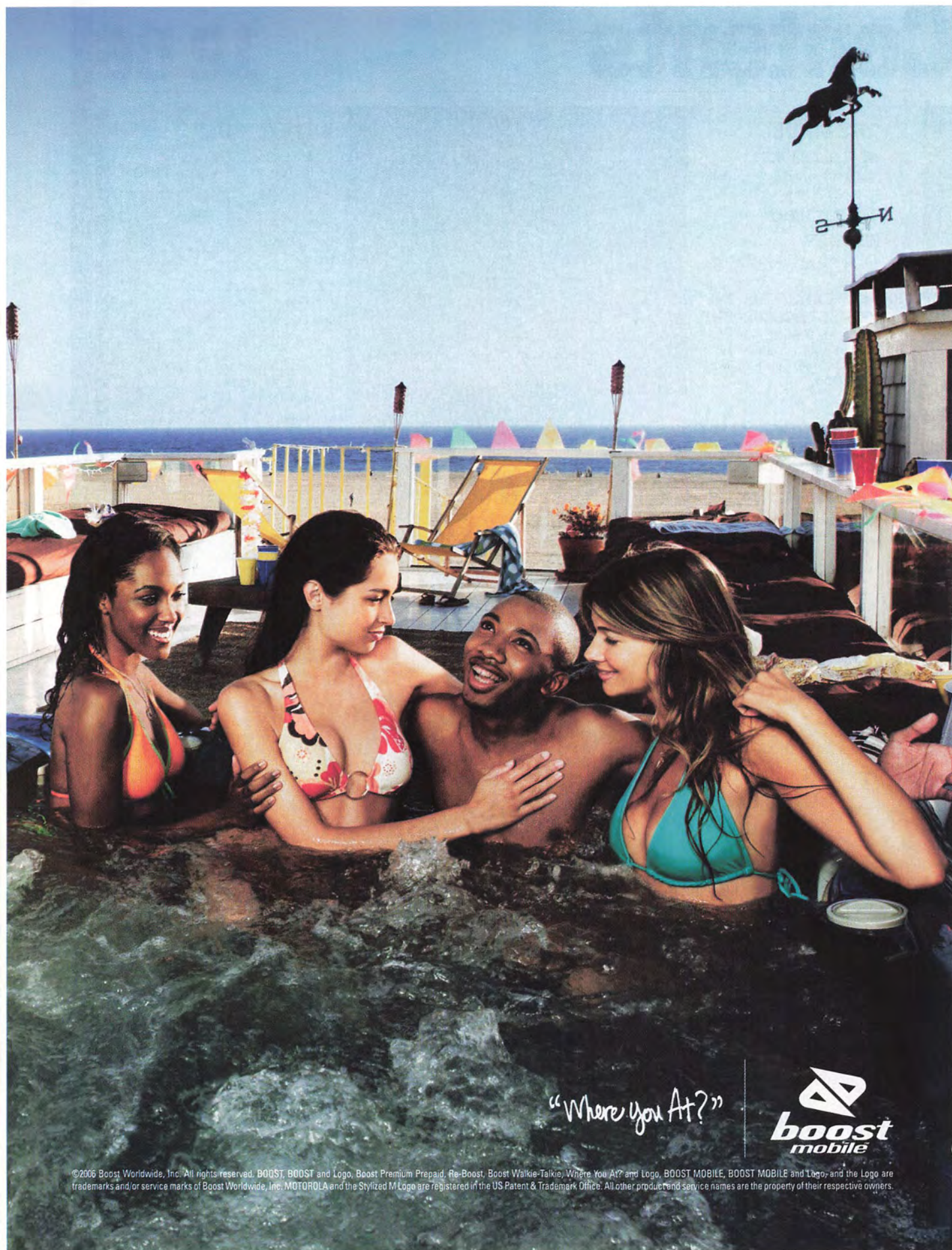
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KATHARINE MCPHEE

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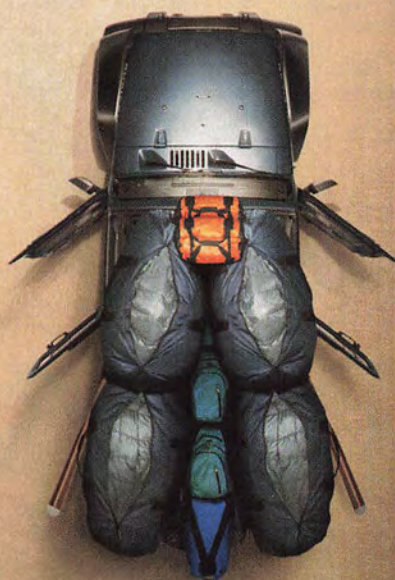
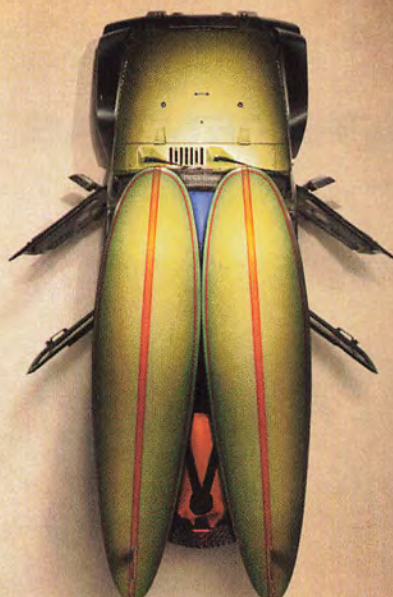
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Big Talker

> Despite all his pomposity and promises of the greatness of his band, Brandon Flowers seems like a relatively low-key dude in his personal life ("Sky Scrapers," November). He married his Urban Outfitters-manager-girlfriend of several years and treats himself to a new car by buying a Volkswagen. He doesn't seem as over-the-top as people say.

Cory Balia, Altoona, IA

See? And everyone's complaining that he's ripping off Springsteen and Bono. He's actually just ripping off some dude you went to high school with.

Sweet 'Stache, Man

> I didn't know the white-trash doofus from *My Name Is Earl* joined the Killers! Perhaps their next album can be called *Sam's Club*.

Anonymous, via e-mail

Dreamboat Brandon

> Thank you for your feature on the Killers. I'm sick and tired of hearing people rag on Brandon Flowers—OK, he has a big mouth sometimes, but he's earned it. His music is proof that rock & roll can ennoble the spirit, deepen the soul and change people's

lives for the better. Critics are right to say that *Sam's Town* isn't on the level of Bruce Springsteen or U2—because it is twice as good as anything those guys have ever put out. Also, Brandon is really hot.

Jennifer Kolows, Pueblo, CO

Now With 50 Percent Less Sad

> It was great to hear Christina Aguilera so happy in your cover feature ("Adult Swim," November). Ms. Aguilera's past remarks are pretty dark. Glad to read she's content. And still *dirty*.

Greg Clover, Rankin, TX

Kid A ... Guilera

> Re: your Christina Aguilera cover story. I can't believe Ms. Aguilera was driving around New York in a limo listening to Thom Yorke's *The Eraser*. I would have pegged her for more of a Xiu Xiu fan.

Kevin MacDade, Pittsburgh

Poor Jordy

> While I believe that your specialists come up with valid points in the accompanying article for the Christina Aguilera cover story ("Who's the Boss?" November), I really can't muster much sympathy for Christina Aguilera's husband, Jordan Bratman. I respect him for having a career, but he never has to work again! Also, I find it hard to believe that his, um, "genie may not come out its bottle"—we're not talking about Oprah here—it's Christina Aguilera!

Kyle Aignan, Springfield, MA >>

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The Killers: Photo taken seconds before photographer nailed with water balloon.

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALEXANDER THOMPSON
GROOMING BY TRACY ALFAJORA

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Hawthorne Heights and the Nintendo Fusion Tour are sweeping across the country this fall, and kicking up the dust on stage and off...when these tour headliners aren't rocking the mic, they are gettin' with the system! The **Wii** game system that is. When left to their own devices with the Wii "get you in the game" controller, that moves right along with you when you play, they showed us what it really means to move. Check them out as they hit serious heights with **The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess**, **Metroid Prime Corruption** and **Excite Truck**.

2

3

5

1





INTRODUCING THE NINTENDO Wii

Be prepared to experience a different way to play, with spankin' new games designed with Wii in mind! And for those old school Nintendo fans out there, Wii will give you access to download games from Nintendo Entertainment system, the Super NES and Nintendo 64. Additional hardware, such as the Classic Controller, is necessary to play these classic games through the Virtual Console and a broadband internet connection is required.

Wii PLAY HAWTHORNE HEIGHTS



HAWTHORNE HEIGHTS WEIGHS IN ON THE NEW Wii CONSOLE

1. ERON BUCCIARELLI - drums

"It's crazy how far its come. It seems like Nintendo has always been on the technological edge with the video games... The graphics are really cool. On top of that you have all this functionality."

2. J.T. WOODRUFF - vocals/guitar

"It's definitely a lot cooler to be interactive. You can actually get a whole group of friends playing it creates more competition. You have more control over what's going on."

3. CASEY CALVERT - guitar

"I cannot believe just the technology of it is even possible. It's ridiculous. Insane! I think I'm probably most excited about the Zelda game."

4. MATT RIDENOUR - bass

"It's really cool. I think it's the start of something new for video games, like getting way more involved than just sitting on the couch."

5. MICAH CARLI - guitar

"The new Nintendo Wii is really fun, I'm really impressed. It's a lot different, more involved, then just sitting on your ass on the couch. You have to get really involved in the game."



The Piano Man

> Regarding your October 2006 piece "Rock Star Wars": How the hell do you have the White Stripes, Elvis Costello, Bruce Springsteen, Britney Spears, Kiss, Chic and even artists who peaked in 2004 (two years in the business is hardly going to prove anyone the "greatest"), and not have Billy Joel anywhere in the draw? Billy Joel had hits in three different decades, won numerous awards, is in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, sold over 80 million records and counting, still sells out concerts today at the age of 57 and wrote and composed his own music. He's the third-highest-selling solo artist in the U.S. of all time behind Elvis Presley and Garth Brooks, but you guys still seem to ignore what he has done in every single piece you do about "Best This" or "Best That." I really do think you have something against Billy Joel.

Tony Romano, Brooklyn, New York

How can you accuse us of having something against Billy Joel? We made fun of his driving in issues 4, 13, 22, 29, 40, 48, 49 and now this one, as well.

Bad Vibrations

> *Blender*, I love you, but are you out of your goddamn mind? You're trying to tell me that one of the greatest pop bands ever, the Beach Boys, was knocked out of your "Rock Star Wars" contest by the Kabbalah-loving, tinny-voiced, orphan-adopting hussy Madonna? Come on! I'm not saying she's a flash in the pan, but she hasn't done nearly as much for music in 30 years as the Beach Boys did at their peak in the '60s.

Sheryl Ashe, Roslyn, WA

Mike Love has had more lasting cultural impact than Madonna? Sure, why not.

Tournament of Champions

> I love the idea behind your "Rock Star Wars," and since *Blender* has such fine taste, I'm sure all will turn out as it should ... but in case it doesn't, I'll be blogging this contest on MySpace,

with the voting done by fellow MySpacers. You can view the blog at blog.myspace.com/joshtheblueprophet and click on "Rock Star Wars." I'll be comparing your results each month and we'll see if you accurately reflect the views of the people. So far, the Rolling Stones, James Brown and OutKast are kickin' ass, while Sleater-Kinney, Britney, Roxy Music and Kanye are sitting in the corner, lacking a single vote. Are you a music mag for the people? We'll see. Game on, *Blender*. Game frickin' on.

Josh Crosby, Huntington Beach, CA

And perhaps our winner will take on your winner for the ultimate battle royale to determine the true, omnipotent ruler of the universe. Or something.

Preacher Man

> I had no idea that former U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft was a gospel sensation back in the day ("Don't Quit Your Day Job!," November). Does anyone else find it ironic that the man who purportedly sang about the "truth" (and named his album after it) would tether his career to the administration that has blatantly lied to the American people and is so unconcerned with the concept?

Jenny Hawten, Richfield, UT

Whatever, hippie.

Even If You Win, You Lose

> I see you've conducted an endurance listening event to Starship's "We Built This City" (in this issue). As the current champion of this rising sport, I challenge any record any of your contributors set. My current record is 24 hours of Eddie Murphy's "Party All the Time." I honestly believe there is something to this endurance listening, and if you ever need anyone to help in continuing the growth of these events, just let me know.

Adam Holland, via e-mail

We envision a circuit of underground, *Fight Club*-style listen-offs, as determined compet- >>



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Lady Sov: flossy, yet unable to floss.

itors stare each other down, listening to Richard Marx, Bette Midler and late-career Beach Boys until someone collapses from aural trauma.

Timber-land

> Ha! I had the same thought while listening to Justin Timberlake's new album *FutureSex/LoveSounds* as reviewer Jonah Weiner (November), who pointed out the homoerotic overtones. Listening to him trade lines with Timbaland, I was sure Justin wasn't talking about Cammy D.

Doug Amaya, Newark, DE

Wouldn't Ya Like to Be a Pepper Too?

> That Red Hot Chili Peppers show that you guys reviewed sounds like a return to form for them ("Red Hot Jam," November). I was a big fan of theirs in the *Mother's Milk* era and even dug *Blood Sugar Sex Magik*, but in recent albums I feel they've fallen off. With all the jamming described and the omission of what recent fans deem "hits," it sounds like they're getting back to their roots.

Damien Chapman, Wellfleet, MA

Grill Master

> Um, the dude who did Lady Sov's grill ("\$848 With Lady Sovereign," November) also did Master P's and ... Leonardo DiCaprio? And why have we not seen Leo rocking this look in public?

Dori Durlacher, Boston

Um, Gisele wouldn't let him? They set off airport metal detectors? He'd look freakin' ridiculous in them? Take your pick, really.

Bow Wow Wow

> Is there anything Snoop can't do ("The Com-

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< NELLY FURTADO AND JOHNNY LEONI >



< CARLOS RODRIGUEZ AND WYCLEF JEAN >



SMILE!

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WIN ME!



mish," November)? Not only can he start a gaming league with megawatt stars of hip-hop and sports, and last in the rap game for over a decade, he also smokes so much weed he could probably go head-to-head with Willie Nelson. He's my hero.

Chris Cantellion, Oroville, CA

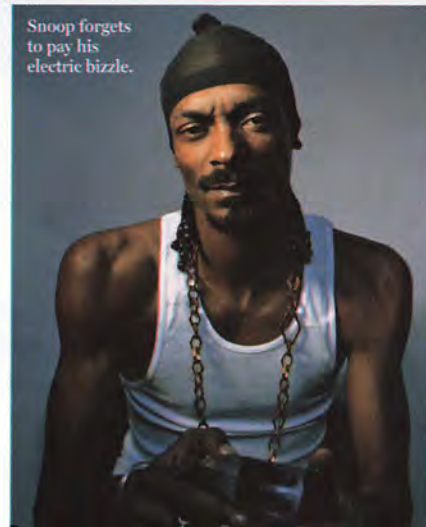
He likely has no recollection of this interview ever happening, so we'll send him a copy as a memento.

LISTEN UP

Blender readers: We want to hear from you! So write in and tell us how you really feel.

Send all correspondence to: your2cents@blender.com, or Blender, 1040 Sixth Avenue, 15th Floor, New York, NY 10018

Snoop forgets to pay his electric bizzle.



LADY SOVEREIGN: GUZMAN; SNOOP: JEFF RIEDEL

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BLUNDER

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ... AND PLENTY YOU DON'T!

LOVESICK

KATE MOSS TAKES THE STAGE WITH HER BEAU PETE DOHERTY, THEN FORCES HIM TO CLEAN UP HIS HEROIN-Y ACT

LOVE IS BLIND and likely deaf, too.

On September 25 and 26, super-model Kate Moss accompanied her fresh-from-rehab boyfriend Pete Doherty and his band Babyshambles onstage in Ireland. During two shows, in Carlow and Dublin, Moss shared vocals with him on the song "La Belle et La Bête."

The merry music-making died, however, when Doherty was spotted buying syringes at a Dublin pharmacy. Moss responded to the incident by hiring bodyguards to keep Doherty out of trouble and urged him to quit the remainder of his U.K. tour. Doherty agreed, and a spokesman released this statement to his fans: "Peter embarked on this arduous tour too soon after his discharge and still needs time to recover from his extensive rehab."

Doherty's uncle Phil Michels, meanwhile, told a U.K. paper that the lovebirds' on-and-off wedding plans are back on track. "Pete has bought Kate an engagement ring and has promised her he will stay off the heroin," Michels said. *Michael Slenske*



Pete and Kate, finally getting around to the "rock & roll" part of "sex, drugs and rock & roll."

BOOZÉ!

BEYONCÉ GOES TO A PARTY, LEAVES, PASSES OUT IN BENTLEY



At London nightclub Mo*vida, Beyoncé celebrates the end of boyfriend Jay-Z's U.K. tour by flashing the Rocawear sign, while he chucks the deuce just behind her.



At 3:30 A.M., Beyoncé, normally the picture of composure, makes a wobbly exit and crawls into the back of the supercouple's chauffeured Bentley.



Perhaps tipsy from too much Dom Pérignon, the singer slumps over, closes her eyes and positions her hands to prevent potential crotch slips.

NEWS ROUNDUP

Less than five months after marrying Nicole Kidman, **KEITH URBAN** voluntarily admitted himself to a rehabilitation facility for alcohol abuse. The singer had checked into a Nashville rehab in 1998, for an addiction to cocaine.

JADAKISS was arrested for weapons-and-drug possession in Yonkers, New York. Police claim to have found a stolen .38-caliber revolver and marijuana in a car in which Jadakiss was seated.

DAVID BOWIE is now available in animated form, guest-starring as Lord Royal Highness on *SpongeBob SquarePants*. "I've hit the Holy Grail of animation gigs," the singer said.

Actress **SCARLETT JOHANSSON** signed a deal with Atco Records to release an album of Tom Waits covers entitled *Scarlett Sings Tom Waits*.

WORD!



"THAT WOULD BE TERRIBLY CORNY."

JAMES BLUNT ON SERENADING HIS DATES

PLUSH'D!

JOHN MAYER BEARS ALL TO TOURMATE SHERYL CROW

IN WEST PALM BEACH, Florida, John Mayer surprised tour coheadliner Sheryl Crow by taking the stage during her set dressed in a bear costume. The grizzly distraction caused Crow to forget some of the words of her hit "My Favorite Mistake."

Mayer later posted a photo on his blog and summed up the moment: "Sheryl Crow leaning against a douchebag in a bear suit." Crow paid back the prank the next night, by appearing onstage during Mayer's set in a bikini.

SNOW DAY

JUSTIN HAWKINS OF THE DARKNESS QUILTS YAYO, BAND

AFTER EMERGING FROM rehab for cocaine and alcohol abuse, Justin Hawkins announced he was quitting as the lead singer of British pop-metal band the Darkness.

Hawkins admitted to blowing over \$275,000 on cocaine in three years, and going on four-day, sleepless coke-and-booze benders. "I was consuming up to five grams a day, which cost me \$1,850 a week, sometimes more," he says. "There are people who can be in bands and stay



Looks healthy to us.

clean, but I'm not one of them." The Darkness will soldier on with bassist Richie Edwards replacing Hawkins as frontman. *David Peisner*

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ENRIQUE IGLESIAS



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PETE WENTZ

NEWS ROUNDUP

MARIANNE FAITHFULL, 60, was diagnosed with breast cancer. The singer, who was forced to postpone her world tour, believes the disease was caught in its early stages. "I have absolute faith and confidence in my fantastic medical team and, of course, I will be well again, if not better than ever," she said.

Rapper **KURTIS BLOW** is partnering with Holy Hip-Hop Music to start Music Ministry Recordings, a Christian hip-hop record label. Blow says that one of the ways to attract a younger generation of churchgoers is through music.

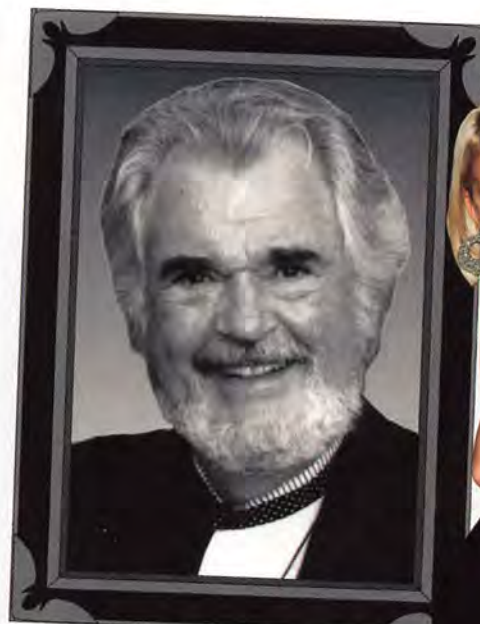
After breaking his engagement to Kari Ann Peniche, **AARON CARTER** has asked the former Miss Teen USA to return a pair of \$10,000 earrings he gave her. The 19-year-old singer proposed to Peniche onstage in Vegas but soon after realized the engagement was "a mistake."

WORD!



"AIN'T NOBODY FEELIN' THAT WAR."

DIDDY ON THE WAR IN IRAQ



Rev. Bob Harrington, C.S.W.
"Certified Soul Winner"



Jessica Simpson has some weird posters in her bedroom.

HOLY WAR!

TEXAS MINISTER WARNS **JESSICA** AND **ASHLEE** OF SAGGING BREASTS, HELLFIRE



IN SEPTEMBER, A Texas minister named Bob Harrington lashed out at Lone Star natives Jessica and Ashlee Simpson for their lusty images and warned of the consequences. "Their breasts will sag, their faces will wither and they'll be left with nothing but a hollow shell," he said.

Ashlee responded by telling a reporter, "You should watch what you say about other people's kids, especially if you're planning on

having any of your own."

The 79-year-old Harrington told *Blender* he never intended to single out the Simpsons but was simply responding to a journalist's question. "They're just one of multitudes," he said. "I didn't want to put them down. I'm in the lifting-up business." He also admitted he wasn't that familiar with the Simpsons' music, but he had heard Ashlee sing: "It's a good thing she looks good. She doesn't sing good." *David Peisner*

BLENDER'S BURNING QUESTION

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE CATCHPHRASE FROM **FLAVOR OF LOVE 2**?

SURVEY SAYS



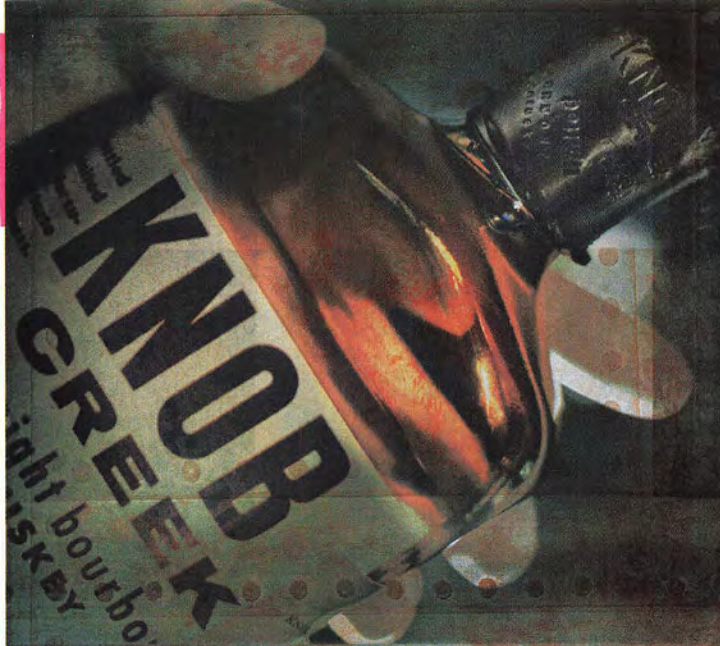
READER WISDOM

"'W000000W-WWWW!' BECAUSE I'M AMAZED AT WHAT HE'S AMAZED AT."

JOY JEFFERSON, COLLEGE PARK, GA

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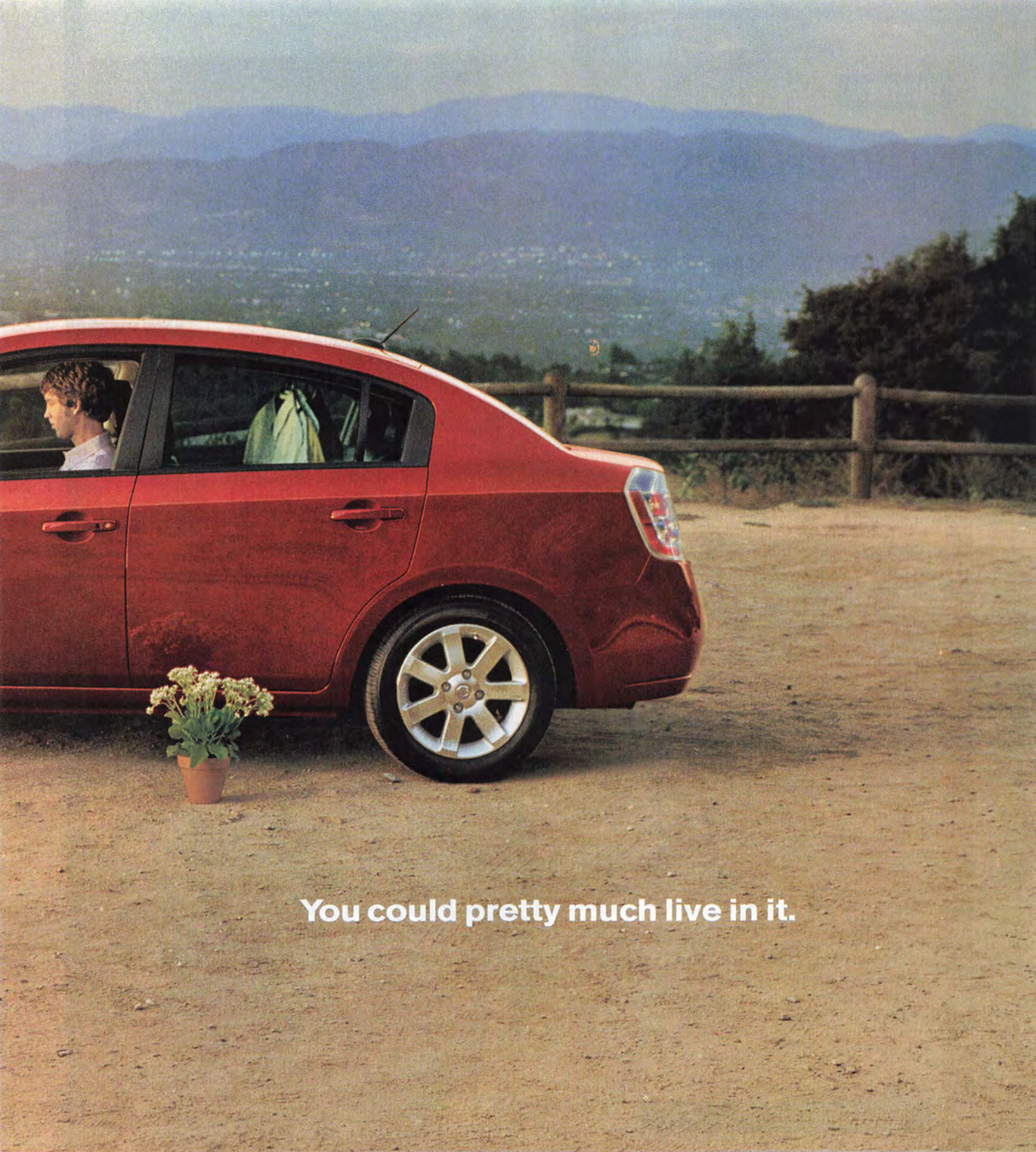


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BURNER

(ALMOST FAMOUS)

YOUNG HOT ROD

50 CENT'S AFFABLE NEW PROTÉGÉ PUTS THE "UNIT" IN G-UNIT

By Josh Eells

Photograph by Matthew Salacuse

+ PLENTY OF RAPPERS have real names that are, shall we say, less than enviable. Snoop Dogg was born Calvin Broadus; Master P is short for Percy; Method Man and T.I. are Cliffords. But they've got nothing on Young Hot Rod. The newest member of 50 Cent's G-Unit clique was christened with the regrettably phallic name of—no joke—Rod Toole.

"Growing up, I never really noticed it," he says with a grin over breakfast at a downtown-Manhattan cafe. "Then a few months ago I went to the eye doctor to get my contacts, and when the dude saw 'Rod Toole' on the package he was like, 'Yo, are you a porno star?' Maybe I should start making movies."

The 21-year-old MC has his hands pretty full already. Last December, he was just another would-be hip-hop star, hustling to get his demos heard while working nine to five at a Phoenix mortgage broker's office. "And then," he says, "Curtis Jackson called."

The man better known as 50 Cent told him to quit his job and hop on a plane to New York, where the next morning—with no luggage: just a toothbrush, toothpaste and some deodorant—Rod would sign a fat recording contract. The next night he celebrated by driving up to 50's Connecticut mansion and going into the studio, where he laid down the verses that would become his first single, "Be Easy."

The track, featuring Mary J. Blige, is typical Hot Rod: laid-back, charismatic rhymes full of brags and wisecracks. "I was never a gangsta," he says. "My moms worked at the post office, and my pop was in the Air Force. I wasn't running around shooting at people, selling drugs—I was the witty kid making everybody laugh. So that's what you'll hear. Just a fun dude talking about girls and cars."

Out Now *Fast Lane* (G-Unit/Interscope)

ALL ABOUT ME!

MUST-SEE TV

Chappelle's Show: *Lost Episodes*. That Tupac sketch had me crying.

RECOMMENDED READING

Those *Left Behind* books. I'm Christian, and they put the whole scary Rapture scene into perspective.

FAVORITE TATTOO

The guardian angel on my arm. He's a warrior—not a gay little baby sitting on a cloud.

**"I WAS NEVER A GANGSTA ...
I WAS THE WITTY KID MAKING
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CHEEKY!

PARIS HILTON

SNAPPED WITH WACKY WEED, HER BUM OUT



SEPTEMBER 28: A bird's-eye view of Hilton's purse revealed a plastic bag with green stuff that looked a lot like pot. "Things are not always as they appear," said her publicist.



SEPTEMBER 30: At Tao nightclub in Las Vegas, Hilton climbed onto a platform and repeatedly lifted her short dress, flashing her ass cheeks to the crowd below.



OCTOBER 7: At Pure nightclub in Las Vegas, Hilton perfected her arse-revealing dance from the week before—this time with bunny ears on her head.

OBITS

RAYMOND "BOZ" BURRELL

60, September 21, in Spain. Original bassist for the '70s English band Bad Company. Burrell served a brief stint with legendary art-rock outfit King Crimson before joining Bad Co.'s super-group lineup.

DANNY FLORES

77, September 19, in Huntington Beach, California, of complications from pneumonia. Credited as Chuck Rio, Flores wrote the riff, played the sax and uttered the one-word lyric on the 1958 party anthem "Tequila"—which won a Grammy and years later made a pop-culture comeback in *Pee Wee's Big Adventure*.

FREDDY FENDER

69, October 14, in Corpus Christi, Texas, of cancer. Tex-Mex singer who hit the pop and country charts in 1975 with the bilingual "Before the Next Teardrop Falls." Fender won Grammys as a member of the Texas Tornados and Los Super Seven and one on his own for the 2002 album *La Musica de Baldemar Huerta*.

WORD!



"YOU HAVE TO MAKE MISTAKES SOMETIMES TO LEARN SOME STUFF."

BRITNEY SPEARS



AFRICA: SO HOT!

JAY-Z, MADONNA AND JESSICA SIMPSON ARE FOLLOWING IN BONO'S FOOTSTEPS BY FUELING UP THE PRIVATE JETS TO SAVE AFRICA

Jessica Simpson

THE CAUSE: Kenyan children with facial deformities

THE ACTION: Simpson trekked to Kenya with Operation Smile, donning scrubs and "assisting" a team that provided free reconstructive surgery.

THE POSSIBLE ULTERIOR MOTIVE: Her trip coincided with her third wedding anniversary with then-husband Nick Lachey.

THE COMMITMENT: "I had spiders in my bed and I didn't even care," she said.

THE BACKLASH: Jess was rumored to have gone on a \$1,500 safari instead of visiting local children.



Madonna

THE CAUSE: Malawi's nearly 1 million orphans

THE ACTION: Madonna pledged to raise \$3 million and visited orphanages, handing out copies of her children's book, *The English Roses: Too Good to Be True*.

THE POSSIBLE ULTERIOR MOTIVE: The orphan center she's building will teach Spirituality for Kids, Kabbalah's children's program.

THE COMMITMENT: She adopted a 1-year-old boy and sent him to London with her nanny.

THE BACKLASH: Human-rights groups demanded her adoption case be examined, claiming laws had been broken.

Jay-Z

THE CAUSE: Lack of clean water in Africa

THE ACTION: During an African tour to help publicize the UN's Water for Life Campaign, the rapper hopes to have 1,000 water pumps built in Africa.

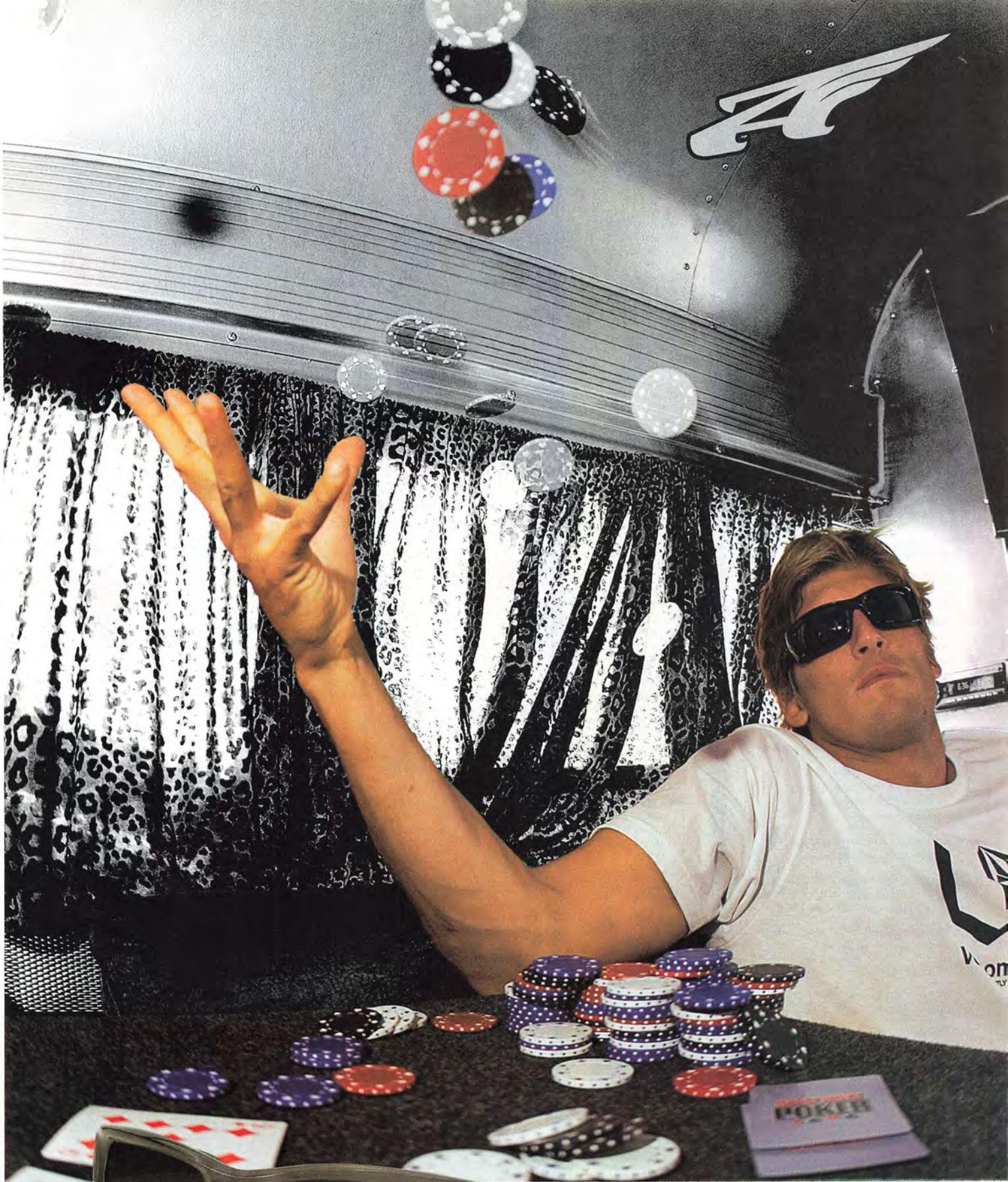
THE POSSIBLE ULTERIOR MOTIVE: An MTV documentary of his African goodwill mission premiered three days after the release of his comeback album, *Kingdom Come*.

THE COMMITMENT: Jigga ponied up \$140,000 of his own cash to build 10 water pumps.

THE BACKLASH: Ticket prices were criticized as well beyond the average African's budget. *David Peisner*



HILTON: TOP: CHARLES SYKES/REX USA; BAUER-GRIFFIN.COM; TIMOTHY JACKSON/WEIN; PACIFICCOASTNEWS.COM; BONO: MIKE HUTCHINGS/REUTERS/CORBIS; SIMPSON: THEO WARD/WIREIMAGE.COM; MADONNA: IN HAY: NEWS INTERNATIONAL/WIREIMAGE.COM; JAY-Z: STEVE MARCUS/REUTERS/CORBIS; MADONNA, BOTTOM: BARM/FAME PICTURES; SPEARS: KEVIN MAZUR/WIREIMAGE.COM



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#34 LINDSAY LOHAN

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CURRENT AGE 20

DEATH CALCULATOR STARTS AT AGE 79

CATEGORY YEARS ADDED/SUBTRACTED

Genes: Italian (+1) and Irish (-2) female (+2) +1

Neurotic: Can act, sing and dance +4

Accident prone: She's had two car crashes; a sprained ankle from getting out of a taxi; a fractured wrist; and a 10-stitch leg gash -2

Asthma: Has battled the affliction for years -2

Smoking: Really likes cigarettes -4

Eating disorders: Reportedly fought bulimia -5

Drug use: Admits to some drug use; meddlesome tabloids regularly publish eyewitness accounts with thinly veiled references to cocaine -4

Boyfriend stress: On-and-off relationship with restaurant owner Harry Morton -3

Dad stress: He's been accused of securities fraud, assault, unlicensed driving, stiffing hotel for \$4,000 bill, punching NYC garbage man -2

Mom stress: Tabloids report a public fight between daughter and her momager -2

Volatile social ties: Revolving cast of frenemies -1

Media fishbowl: Must endure public scrutiny, persistent rumors of breast implants -2

Nocturnal lifestyle: Studio boss complained about her partying, unprofessionalism; hospitalized several times for exhaustion -3

Unhealthy diet: Red Bull is a favorite, which may account for her recent bloating -5

Workaholic: Has been working since age 3 -1

ESTIMATED LIFE EXPECTANCY 48

PROJECTED YEAR OF DEATH 2034

Gerontologist DR. DEMKO: "Lohan's inability to manage her toxic lifestyle will jeopardize her career. Yoga, meditation and cessation of smoking will cultivate much-needed peace of mind."

NEWS ROUNDUP

Grammy winners **THREE 5 MAFIA** will star in an MTV reality show, *Adventures in Hollywood*, based on their experience moving from Memphis to Los Angeles.

JON BON JOVI and guitarist **RICHIE SAMBORA** will be made into action figures by McFarlane Toys. "Bon Jovi is one of the most consistent and recognizable rock bands of all time," says company chief Todd McFarlane. Drummer Tico Torres and bassist David Bryan have been left out of the plans.

The man convicted of attempted first-degree murder in the shooting of singer-songwriter **MARC COHN** was sentenced to 36 years in prison. The failed carjacking left Cohn with a bullet in his temple.

INXS, featuring new frontman J.D. Fortune, have been dropped by their U.S. label, Epic Records.

WORD!



"TAKE YOUR FUCKING FINGER FOOD AND FUCK OFF."

BONO TO A NOISY CROWD AT HIS WIFE'S FASHION PARTY WHILE DAMIEN RICE PERFORMED



Eddie Van Halen: making the shirtless overalls look work since 1983.

FOUND CRAP #1

WE TUBE ... YOU TUBE

VANTASTIC!

ON THE EVE OF A RUMORED **VAN HALEN** REUNION, *BLENDER* UNEARTHS EDDIE'S SHREDDING SOLO AT 1983 US FESTIVAL

BACKSTORY

As seen in a three-minute video posted on YouTube by Van Halen fanatic BatmanVH, 1983 was a great year to be Eddie Van Halen. His band had five smash albums under its belt and earned \$1 million to close the three-day US Festival in San Bernardino, California. Showcased here is a glorious relic of that bygone era: the endless guitar solo.



EYEWITNESS



"Eddie could do no wrong in 1983," recalls Neil Zlozower, Van Halen's touring photographer, who watched the performance from the stage. "This was his chance to prove his talents to the world, and he was on fire." The virtuoso's superspeed tremolo picking translated into serious groupie lure backstage. "It was a big party," Zlozower recalls. "Lots of booze flowing, a very high vibe and tons of dripping babes."

AFTERLIFE

This fall, reunion rumors sparked when Eddie told Howard Stern he was "open" to playing with David Lee Roth again. Zlozower, who still stays in touch with the band, tells *Blender*, "I'm not gonna say anything. But chances are it will happen."



HOW TO FIND IT

"Eddie Van Halen" + "US Festival" + "solo"

INDIAN GIVER

SAVOIR-BAITING **SLAYER** BANNED AND CENSORED IN ASIA

In October, Slayer's latest album, *Christ Illusion*, was pulled from shelves in India after a Christian group complained about its content and cover, which depicts an armless Jesus wading in blood. "It's like the Salem witch trials," guitarist Kerry King told *Blender*.

Singapore officials forced Slayer to alter their October 13 concert set list to exclude songs that "offend or denigrate any race or religion," a request that targeted eight songs,



Jesus is turning in his grave right now.

including "The Antichrist" and "Jihad," and two albums, *Christ Illusion* and 1986's classic *Reign in Blood*. David Peisner



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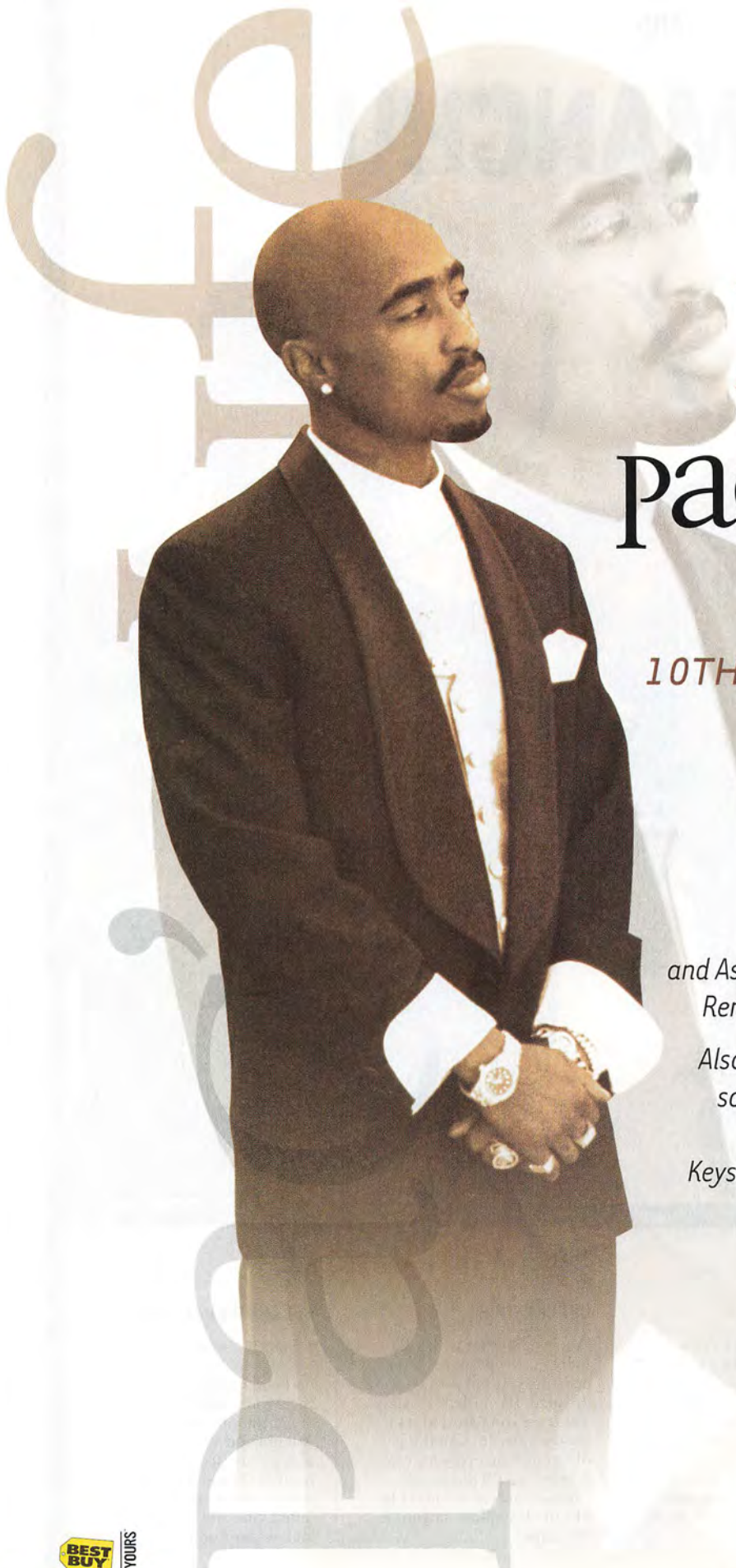
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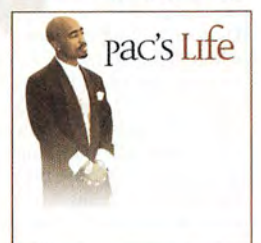
2Pac pac's Life

*New studio album
commemorating the
10TH YEAR ANNIVERSARY
of the late poet, activist,
actor and legend
TUPAC SHAKUR*

*Includes the singles "Pac's Life"
Produced by LT Hutton featuring T.I.
and Ashanti and "Untouchable" Swizz Beatz
Remix featuring Bone Thugs-n-Harmony*

*Also includes unreleased music featuring
some of the biggest names in the game
including Young Buck, Snoop Dogg,
Keyshia Cole, Lil Scrappy, and The Outlawz*

**IN STORES
NOVEMBER 21ST**



2paclegacy.com



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HOW TO ...

GROW A FU MANCHU

CONFUCIUS SAY: GNARLY FACIAL HAIR, LIKE THAT SPORTED BY THE ATLANTA-BASED CRUNK STARS **YING YANG TWINS**, GET YOU MANY COMPLIMENT

By Steve Kandell
Photograph by Jeff Minton

From left:
D-Roc and
Kaine.



Out Now *Chemically Imbalanced* (TVT)

1

GET INSPIRED

D-Roc: "Living up to our whole 'Ying Yang' name, I'm rocking the Asian look right now. I wanted something different, and it's a fashion statement: The Fu Manchu is saying, 'Ying Yang is in this thang.' It takes a year to grow the mustache fully down to your chest, so it's not for someone who's impatient."

2

GET SOME HELP

"Right now I've got extensions to help the hair grow out faster. Find a salon, call around and see who do it. In Atlanta, there's Niche's. They'll match the extensions to your hair color. Then you gotta tease it to keep it straight. Good extensions cost maybe a couple hundred dollars."

3

GET CREATIVE

"You can do a lot with a Fu Manchu—you can twist the ends up, you can get the beard dreaded. It's no-holds-barred, whatever you like, and it's a good way to do something different than everyone else. Sometimes I'll put on my Chinese lantern hat and I be like the EA Sports slogan: in the game."

4

GET ANOTHER OPINION

Kaine: "I got my own kind of beard goin' on, I don't need no Fu Manchu mustache. But they're all right, they remind me of channel 69 at home in Atlanta and all the kung fu movies we used to watch. My brother D-Roc is the more upbeat one, I'm a little more quiet: ying and yang. So the look works for him."

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SAMSUNG

POPOZÃO

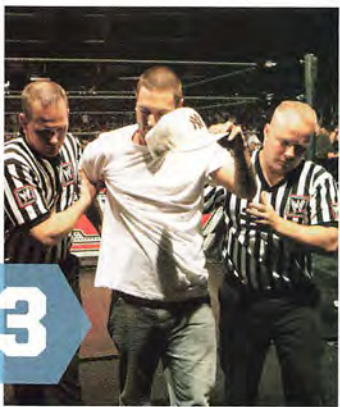
K-FED TALKS SNAP,
GETS SLAMMED ON
WWE RAW



Kevin Federline enters the ring and the crowd boos—despite his promise not to rap. He then challenges WWE wrestler John Cena, who responds by lifting him in the air.



When Cena declared Mr. Spears to be “less talented than Paris Hilton” the audience cheered, but when Fed was body-slammed to the canvas, it was pandemonium.



After the crowd-pleasing move, a dazed Federline picks himself and his baseball hat off the mat, and is ushered out of the ring by two wrestling officials.

NEWS
ROUNDUP

Former blink-182 drummer **TRAVIS BARKER** broke his arm while shooting a video for his new project, +44, with bandmate Mark Hoppus. Barker has been ordered to “stay off his arm” for eight weeks.

AXL ROSE was sued by a Los Angeles art dealer after Rose allegedly paid only \$1.2 million for an Andy Warhol portrait of John Lennon. Rose had initially agreed to pay \$2.36 million.

JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE plans to design a collection of backpacks for the Memphis company Ful, in which he’s an investor.

STEVEN TYLER recently announced that he has hepatitis C. The Aerosmith singer has received treatment and plans to raise awareness of the blood-borne disease.

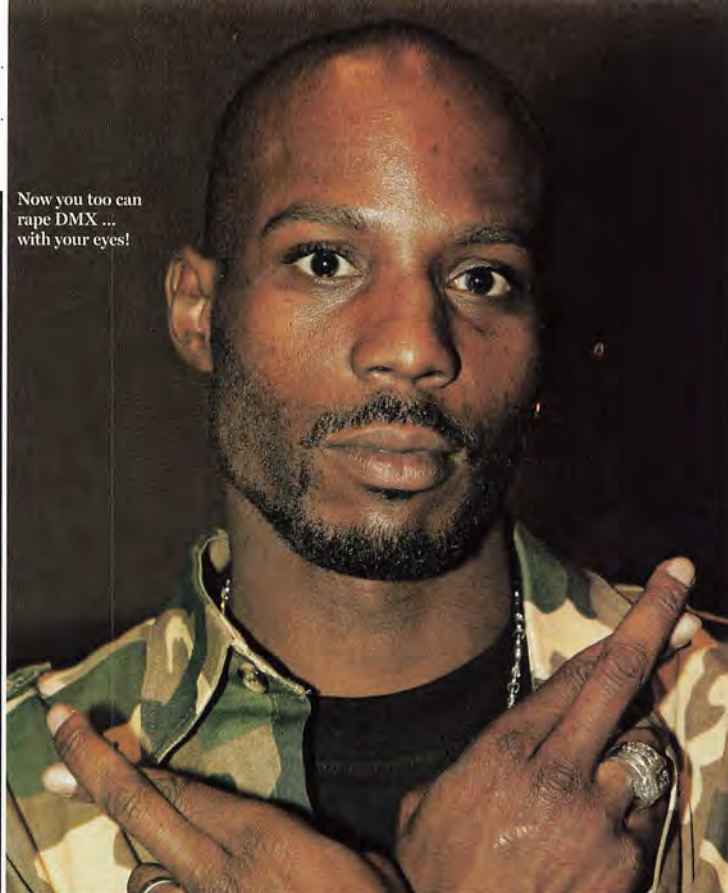
WORD!



“I DON’T UNDERSTAND A BEYONCÉ OR A JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE.”

STING

Now you too can
rape DMX ...
with your eyes!



“MY MAN BE OUT”

DMX SAYS HE WAS RAPED BY A WOMAN IN HIS SLEEP

✖ DMX HAS ACCUSED Monique Wayne of sexually assaulting him in his sleep at a Washington, D.C., hotel.

“She raped me,” said DMX, referring to the woman who gave birth to their son, Javon Micai Wayne, in April 2004. “That might sound like some bullshit, but is that the only thing in the world that’s not possible? If I did sleep with her I would remember. It ain’t like she’s a pretty girl.” He explained that his sleeping habits would make intercourse possible: “Because when I sleep, my man be out.”

After the surprising rape claims,

published in *Sister 2 Sister* magazine, Wayne filed a multimillion-dollar defamation lawsuit against the rapper, claiming psychological stress.

DMX, who has four children with wife Tashera Simmons, has been paying Wayne monthly child support ever since a 2004 paternity suit against him. To avoid future rapes, the rapper vowed to “turn on the light before I go to sleep.”

This isn’t the first fatherhood quagmire for the rapper born Earl Simmons. Last May, a judge ordered him to pay \$5,000 a month to Davita Oden, the baby-mama of a 4-year-old girl named Jada. *Michael Slenske*

WEIRD BAND ALERT

HURRA TORPEDO

A “KITCHEN-APPLIANCE ROCK TRIO” FROM NORWAY. *YOG!*

SO HOW IS THIS DONE?

Dishwashers, sinks and toasters are assembled onstage and played like instruments. Their cover of Bonnie Tyler’s “Total Eclipse of the Heart,” as seen on YouTube, is a career high.

OK, NOW, WHY IS THIS DONE?

“Our aim is to create beautiful music,” says bassist Egil Hegerberg, 32, who formed the band 13 years ago. “The crushing of kitchen appliances is secondary.”



The dishwasher leers at a groupie.

HOW DO THE MACHINES HOLD UP?

“We have to replace them each night,” Hegerberg says. “You can’t make an omelet on the appliances that we have been playing on. Quite often they are too hurt.” *Tony McMenamin*

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DO YOU ROCK?

PITBULL

DOES THE CRUNKY CUBAN MC INDEED ... ROCK?

BEST RUMOR ABOUT YOURSELF?

That I am black.

WORST TOUR HORROR STORY?

I was on the road with Uncle Luke, and he had these three really pretty girls. And then he switched them out with three really ugly girls. They were rough to deal with, definitely the B-team. I called them the Terror Squad.

BRUSH WITH THE LAW?

When the whole Columbine thing went down, I was caught with a roll of pennies, and they charged me with having a weapon on school grounds.

BIGGEST CELEB IN YOUR CELL PHONE?

The Rock.

EVER WRECKED A CAR?

In Miami, I was coming off the highway in a Toyota Corolla and I spun out of control. I got a DUI.

EVER GET LUCKY ON AN AIRPLANE?

Yes, but not lucky like, I got with one of the stewardesses.

IT'S DINNERTIME. WHAT ARE YOU COOKING?

Cuban steak, rice and beans and plantains.

BEST HIGH?

Three vodka cranberries

MOST EXPENSIVE ITEM OF CLOTHING?

I'm usually in the clearance section. I don't be on that bullshit. *Dave Hill*

VERDICT

WAIT, HE KNOWS THE ROCK? THE MILE HIGH CLUB AND DISCOUNT CLOTHES SHOPPING? PITBULL DOESN'T NOT ROCK, HE ROCKS!



OUT NOW EL MARIÉL DIAZ BROS./TVT RECORDS

NEWS ROUNDUP

MEAT LOAF has made arrangements for his ashes to be scattered over Yankee Stadium after he dies. The singer is refusing to disclose any further details, as the act would be illegal.

Bidding for **PAULA ABDUL** failed to reach the reserve of \$26,000 in a recent eBay auction she participated in for multiple sclerosis. The winner would have received travel to Los Angeles, a shopping spree and a meeting with Abdul.

THOM YORKE has threatened to stop touring abroad due to the impact jet-fuel emissions have on the environment. Instead, he says, he'll explore other travel options, like taking the train. "I would consider refusing to tour on environmental grounds," he said.

Epic Records is resurrecting the Latin boy band **MENUDO**, holding open auditions, and partnering with MTV to air a reality show on the process. The new band will release their album sometime in 2007.

WORD!



"I'M NOT, LIKE, THAT SMART."

PARIS HILTON



Linkin Park prove they're above the law by garroting the photo assistant.

IN THE STUDIO

"NOT NÜ-METAL!"

LINKIN PARK AND RICK RUBIN TONE DOWN THE RAP-ROCK, RECORD IN HOUDINI'S MISTRESS'S HOME

LINKIN PARK ARE recording their much-anticipated third album in a house teeming with Hollywood history. Not only did it once belong to gangster Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel, it's where famed illusionist Harry Houdini received his booty calls. "His mistress lived here," says singer Chester Bennington. "There's a tunnel that goes down the block to Houdini's house. At night he'd sneak over here, have some extramarital sex, then walk back to his unsuspecting wife."

America's best-selling rock band has been recording here since last spring with producer Rick Rubin, who owns the love-nest turned studio. At last count they'd written 100 songs, which they're whittling down to 18. "We've put way more time and energy into this album than is sane," says guitarist Brad Delson.

The rap-rock sextet is relying less on the studio wizardry that helped their first two albums sell over 37 million copies worldwide. "It's more organic and raw," Bennington says.

"Rick has brought more of a stripped down, classic-rock and hip-hop kind of feel. We're using vintage guitars and drums carved out of wood and skin for a more tribal sound. It's definitely not nü-metal."

He's more cryptic when it comes to specifics like the album's title, instead offering this fill-in-the-blank clue: T_____ and T_____. (*Trials and Tribulations*, maybe?) "We're obsessive with secrecy around here," Bennington says. "Our friends all have to sign in and out, and we have a guard 24 hours a day—it's not a welcoming environment." *Josh Eells*

ALL ABOUT OUR RECORD

ARTIST: Linkin Park

PRODUCER: Rick Rubin and Mike Shinoda

STUDIO: Personal Studio, Los Angeles

LAST ALBUM: *Meteora*, 2003

NEW ALBUM: As yet untitled, due Feb. '07

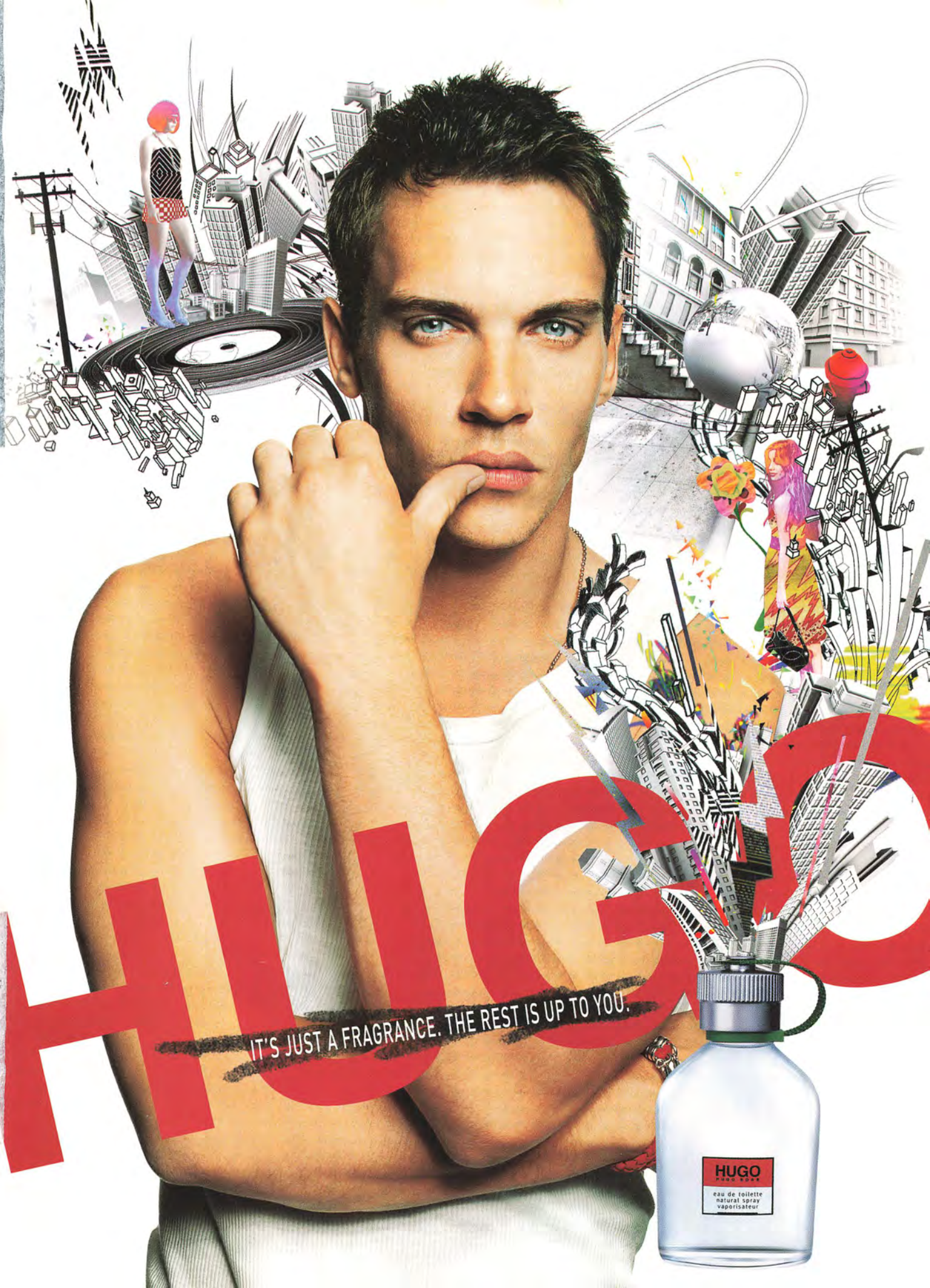
ALSO IN THE STUDIO

Indie-alt-rock shredders **DINOSAUR JR.** are in frontman J Mascis's Amherst, Massachusetts, studio recording their first album in 10 years with their original lineup.

Fall Out Boy pals **THE ACADEMY IS ...** are recording their sophomore album at Pulse Studio in Los Angeles with producer Butch Walker for the label Fueled by Ramen.



Perennially cool **PJ HARVEY** is at work on her eighth studio album, the follow-up to 2004's *Uh Huh Her*, with producers Flood and John Parish in London.



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GUEST LIST

COMPETITIONS, EVENTS
AND OTHER FUN STUFF
WE THOUGHT YOU
SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

BLENDER SESSIONS AT THE HARD ROCK CAFE, CHICAGO

On August 7, *Blender* presented the Chicago leg of the 2006 Ambassadors of Rock Tour at the Hard Rock Cafe. More than 500 fans, press and VIPs enjoyed live performances by **Dave Navarro's** new band, **The Panic Channel** and **Rose Hill Drive**. The Hard Rock Cafe donated event proceeds to Panic Channel's pet charities, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society and the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation.



Dave Navarro reaches out to fans

Photos courtesy of WireImage

SUMMER X GAMES, LOS ANGELES

On August 2, *Blender*, Oakley, Amp'd Mobile and Dos Equis kicked off the Summer X Games with a special concert event at L.A. hotspot Element. Extreme sports stars and celebrities were treated to performances by **Head Automatica** and **Pitbull** and danced late into the night to music by **DJ Vice**.



Lil Jon



Tara Reid and
Kristin Cavallari



Head Automatica performs



Carey Hart and Pink

Photos courtesy of FilmMagic



20

SONGS YOU SHOULD DOWNLOAD THIS MONTH

1 POP LEVI

"BLUE HONEY" COUNER

Bearded Liverpudlian hippie weirdo serves up a psychedelic blues boogie.

2 50 CENT, EMINEM, CASHIS AND LLOYD BANKS

"YOU DON'T KNOW" SHADY/INTERSCOPE
 From the new Shady *Re-Up* mix tape, an ominous posse cut featuring some G-Unit pistol-talk and wild Eminem tongue-twisting.

3 MY CHEMICAL ROMANCE

"FAMOUS LAST WORDS" REPRISE

A skyrocketing power ballad about treating emotional wounds with a 5,000-mg dose of ginormous chorus.

4 CHINGY

"DEM JEANS" CAPITOL

Hip-hop's smoothest Urkel soundalike praises gigantic asses and the jeans that struggle valiantly to contain them.

5 ...TRAIL OF DEAD

"STAND IN SILENCE" INTERSCOPE

A monster riff and anthemic wails from the Austin, Texas indie stalwarts.

7 FERGIE FEAT. LUDACRIS

"GLAMOROUS" INTERSCOPE

Pillowly synths from Polow Da Don, contradictory rhymes about first-class glitz and Taco Bell and one killer Luda cameo.

8 VANESSA HUDGENS

"COME BACK TO ME" HOLLYWOOD

This Disney Channel hotshot hijacks Player's "Baby Come Back" and flips it into prime Tween&B.

9 DA GREAT YOLA

"AIN'T NOBODY" GRAND HUSTLE

Some boisterous thug motivation and self-love from T.I.'s latest charge.

10 120 DAYS

"COME OUT, COME DOWN, FADE OUT, BE GONE" VICE

Norwegian electro-rockers make a glittering soundtrack for hipster space exploration.

11 LILY ALLEN

"LDN" CAPITOL

U.K. ska-pop's girl wonder delivers a loving ode to her home city—crack whores, muggers, discount superstores and all.

12 MEW

"THE ZOOKEEPER'S BOY" RED INK/COLUMBIA

Sweeping indie-rock with a gorgeously wistful hook, all the way from Denmark.

13 YOUNG JEEZY

"I LOVE IT" DEF JAM

The rapper behind the evil snowman and the beatmaker behind "What You Know" make a symphonic trap jam.

14 SUFJAN STEVENS

"MAJESTY SNOWBIRD" (LIVE) [ONLINE]

A current tour staple featuring orchestral grandeur and hushed declamations: in other words, 100 percent uncut Soof.

15 (+44)

"WHEN YOUR HEART STOPS BEATING" INTERSCOPE

The math is complex. Take blink-182, subtract Tom DeLonge, add 44, and you get this wistful pop-punk gem.

16 BOBBY CREEKWATER

"BOBBY CREEK" SHADY

Eminem had to go all the way to Florida to find his latest signee, who delivers this gleefully repetitive monument to himself.

17 THE GAME

"LET'S RIDE (STRIP CLUB)" GEFFEN

G-strings in the backseat. Pasties riding shotgun. Where does The Game fit the pole, though, when he turns his car into a strip joint?

18 LUPE FIASCO FEAT. JAY-Z

"PRESSURE" ATLANTIC

King Hova liked this Chicago upstart so much he decided to executive-produce his album—and lend him a scorching cameo.

19 BIRDMAN & LIL' WAYNE

"STUNTIN' LIKE MY DADDY" (ROCK REMIX) CASH MONEY/UNIVERSAL

Hip-hop and daddy issues go together like Freudians and couches. Here, the Cash Money honcho and his "son" team up.

20 KLAXONS

"ATLANTIS TO INTERZONE" MODULAR

Hummable art-punk chaos from these hyped-up U.K. imports.

ICON KEY



SADDOES



HIPSTERS



RAWK



AGING HIPSTERS



CRUNKY



SUPERSTAR POP



6 SONG OF THE MONTH

THE DECEMBERISTS

"O VALENCIA!" CAPITOL

A wordy, catchy tale of bloody courtship from the indie-rock troupe unafraid to dress—or sound—like turn-of-the-century librarians.



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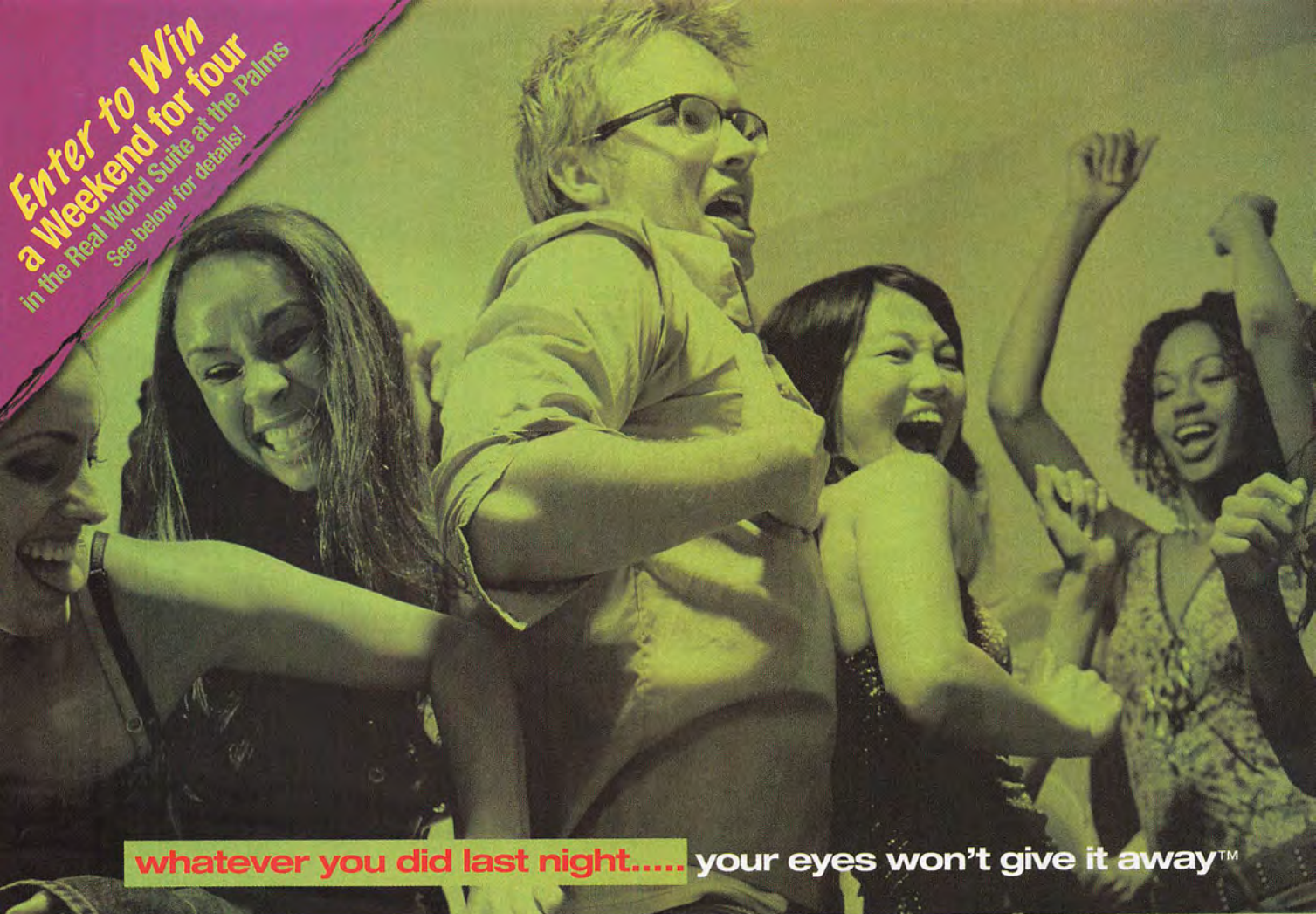
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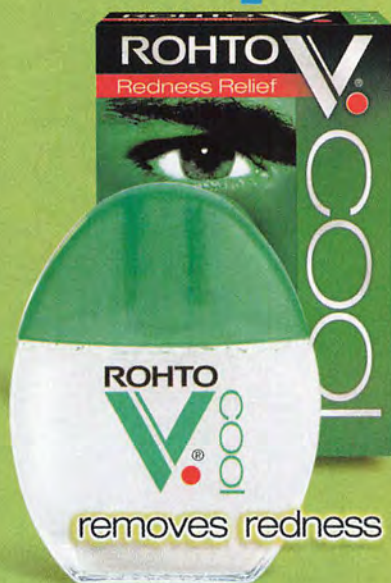
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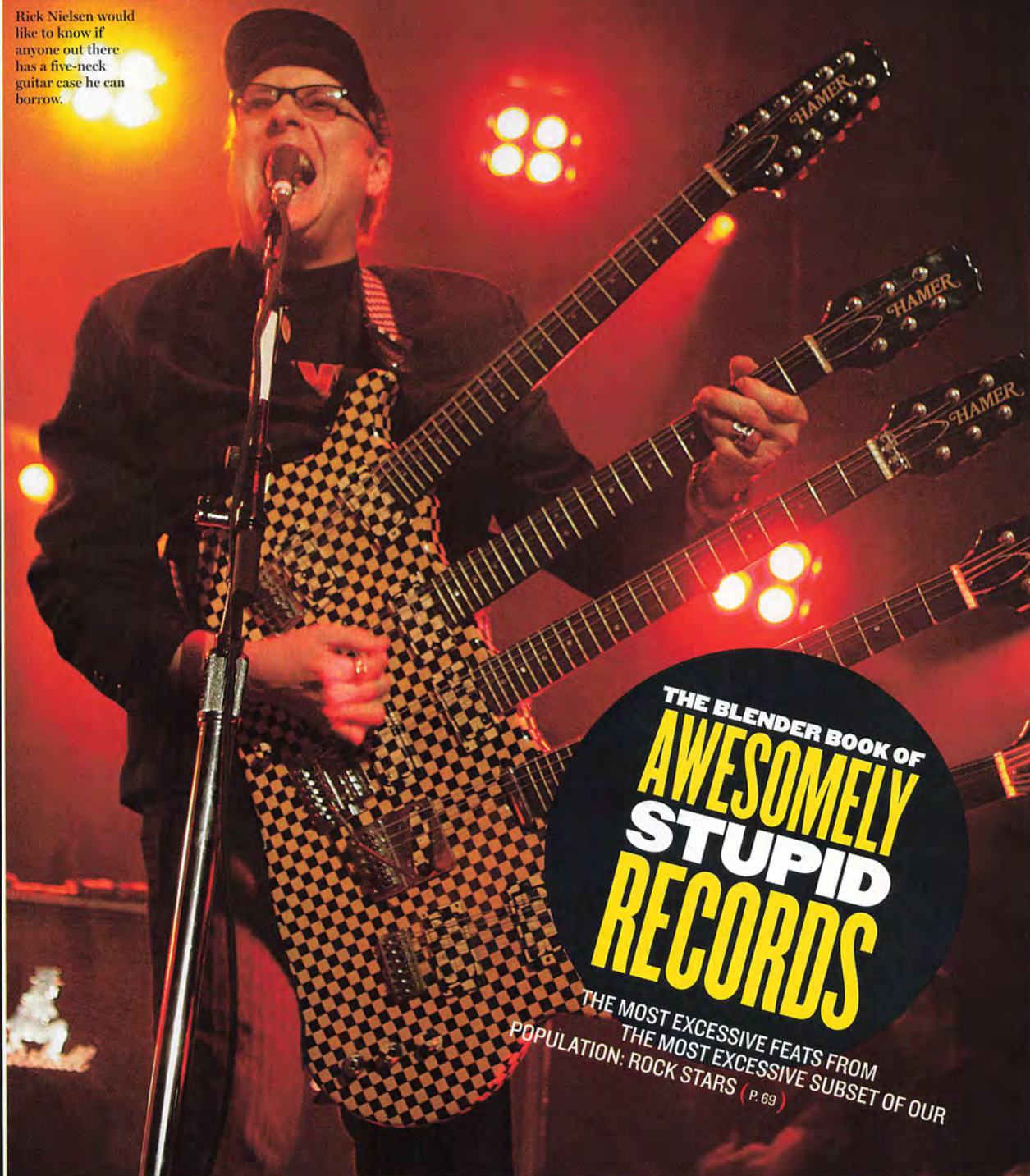
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INSIDE

KNOWING STUFF IS GOOD

Rick Nielsen would like to know if anyone out there has a five-neck guitar case he can borrow.



THE BLENDER BOOK OF
**AWESOMELY
STUPID
RECORDS**

THE MOST EXCESSIVE FEATS FROM
THE MOST EXCESSIVE SUBSET OF OUR
POPULATION: ROCK STARS (P. 69)



Jerry Lee shows off his brand-new, never-to-be removed wedding band.

J

THE INDESTRUCTIBLE ROCK & ROLL LEGEND ON GUNS, WOMEN ... AND PIPE SMOKING

(By Adam Higginbotham)

J E R R Y L E E L E W I S

Setting his piano on fire using a Coke bottle filled with gasoline; bigamously marrying his 13-year-old cousin; losing both of his sons in tragic accidents; inadvertently shooting his own bass player in the chest with a .357 magnum; crashing his car into the gates of Graceland: The stories they tell about Jerry Lee Lewis would make him a legend even if he hadn't helped invent rock & roll.

But now, at 71, "The Killer" says he's a changed man—the once hard-drinking, womanizing creator of "Great Balls of Fire" has even given up swearing. "Curse words, takin' God's name in vain—stuff like that, I don't do anymore. I haven't done in years. I used to be pretty bad about that—back when I was a young man."

But even after entering his seventh decade, Jerry Lee is still touring, and he recently returned to the studio for the first time in more than 10 years to record *Last Man Standing*, a set of duets with young upstarts like Jimmy Page, Mick Jagger, Neil Young and Willie Nelson.

Fresh off a plane from Memphis, Jerry Lee and his small entourage—including his daughter Phoebe and his childhood friend Cecil Harrelson—clamber from a stretch limousine outside a Los Angeles photo studio. The Killer introduces himself, walks carefully to a small lounge inside and takes a seat, apparently prepared to answer whatever questions come his way: "Do as you want to," he instructs in his gravelly Louisiana drawl.



IS IT TRUE YOU HATE BEING CALLED "THE KILLER"? AND HOW'D YOU GET THE NICKNAME IN THE FIRST PLACE?

Meister_FL, Topeka, KS

I don't mind being called the Killer. I got the name when I was about 15 years old: I was leaving the schoolhouse, and Cecil Harrelson said, "Well, I'll see you later, Killer"—and I said, "OK, I'll meet you at the pool hall!" We both got suspended that day—two weeks apiece, and we didn't even know each other—we'd just met. I was fighting with a teacher, he was fighting with a teacher, and so we figured we'd call ourselves Killer. And that's how it got started.

WHEN DID YOU FIRST REALIZE THAT YOU'D MADE IT AS A MUSICIAN?

Jerry.Forster, Enid, OK

When I put my first record out, "Crazy Arms." I just knew that was a hit. Dewey Phillips played it on the radio for the first time, and it thrilled me. I couldn't believe I was hearing myself on the radio—WHBQ, "Red, Hot and Blue!"

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU SET A PIANO ON FIRE?

MarkyVanHalen, North Platte, NE

I never did—that's a bunch of baloney. I destroyed a piano once—with my hands. Pushed it off a stage, pushed it down a road, pushed it in the ocean. I did that many, many years ago, in Florida. This piano wasn't no good—so I just took care of it. It ended up in the ocean. Made a big splash.

DO YOU STILL CARRY A GUN?

Lacrymost, Rockford, IL

A gun—ha ha ha ha! No, I don't carry a gun. I'm an excellent shot, though. A .44 magnum is my favorite.



Left: Jerry Lee does not need your damn piano stool (1958); top: Kid Rock's *Fabulous Baker Boys* impression doesn't go over well (2004).

WHAT DOES JERRY LEE LEWIS LOOK FOR IN A WOMAN?

55Spodecodee, Cedar Rapids, IA

Looooove—oh, careless love. I haven't womanized in the last 15 years, so I don't know. What did I look for before then? Well ... I wouldn't wanna say—because I'm a gentleman. I used to be pretty wild and woolly. But I'm not like that anymore ... so far.

YOU ONCE PLAYED IAGO IN A MUSICAL VERSION OF OTHELLO. CAN YOU QUOTE ANY SHAKESPEARE?

JKatzzenburgher, Huntsville, TN

Yeah—but I'm not gonna do it. It's been so long ... it was a lot of fun, but it was hard work. Running up and down those stairs—that play ran two hours, and it got to you. Your legs would get tired, and your arms would get tired—you get tired all over. After that, all I wanted was to catch the first thing smokin' out of L.A., get back to Memphis, get to my piano and sing my songs.

YOU'VE BEEN MARRIED SIX TIMES, STARTING WHEN YOU WERE 15. I'M ABOUT TO PROPOSE TO MY GIRLFRIEND—DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR ME?

RueTheDay, Lexington, KY

Well, my last marriage makes seven times—I keep the record straight. I'm not lookin' to get married again ... of course, I've said that every time. Advice? Think about it for a long time—and be very, *very* careful. You

should make sure you really love the girl, the girl really loves you and you know what you're getting into. Because marriage is a very sacred thing, and it's not to be played around with.

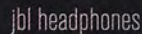
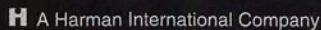
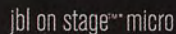
DID YOU REALLY DRIVE YOUR CAR INTO THE GATES OF GRACELAND?

Marksman 1089, Fayetteville, NC

One time. Accidentally. Elvis kept calling me to come up there—he wanted to talk to me about something. So after a while he caught me at the right time one night—I was drinkin' champagne and feelin' no pain. I got in the car and went up there and ... I accidentally ran into the gate. I *bumped* the gate—I didn't run into it. It kind of looked like the iron silhouettes of Elvis on the gate were doing a show. I was enjoying watching it. Then there was cops all around—they said, "Did you come up here to hurt Elvis?" I said, "Well, what else would I come up here for, but to hurt him?" Anybody that stupid deserves a stupid answer.



"IN MY DAY, WE DIDN'T HAVE NO DRUGS—TRUCK DRIVERS WOULD GIVE US PILLS TO KEEP AWAKE."

[illegible][illegible]

YOU ONCE SAID, "WHAT THE SHIT DID ELVIS DO EXCEPT TAKE DOPE I COULDN'T GET A HOLD OF?" IF YOU COULD MEET ELVIS AGAIN, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO HIM?

Bitshifter, Dayton, OH

Oh, I could have got hold of the dope if I'd wanted to. I couldn't believe he was doing it like he was doin' it—he was killin' hisself. What would I say to him now? The same thing—I'd tell him he's crazy, and he should stop that foolishness, get off that dope kick and get back on the main line, you know? He didn't need all that dope—Elvis had too much talent for that.

WHAT'S THE WORST DRUG YOU'VE EVER TAKEN?

F. Reynolds, Huntsville, AL

Well, back in my day, we didn't have no drugs—truck drivers would give us a few of those pills to keep you awake ... I guess it was speed ... I'd take those things, but they weren't nothing like the drugs got to be in the '60s and '70s and '80s. They got strong. I was scared to death of that stuff.

WHAT'S THE BEST DIRTY JOKE YOU'VE EVER HEARD?

PopDaWeasel, Chattanooga, TN

I can't recall any dirty jokes, in particular. But one time Patsy Cline—when I first met her, she walked into the auditorium in Little Rock, Arkansas, pulled me by the nape of the neck, off into the men's restroom, into a stall and told me a joke that was pretty dirty. Now I can't even remember what the joke was—but it was pretty rank. She didn't mean nothin' by it—she was just laughin'. She was a great person.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE MUSIC THAT COMES OUT OF NASHVILLE THESE DAYS?

Paul E., Macon, GA

I think it's crap. Excuse my language—I shouldn't have said that. It all sounds alike to me. They're not doing any down-the-road country music. I don't know what they're doin'—I don't think they know what they're doin', either. I think it stopped being good when I left there!

WHAT'S THE CLOSEST YOU'VE COME TO DEATH?

KillerKayak, North Port, FL

Runnin' into a horse one night in a car. I was with my friend Doc Stone—he said, "Watchoutahorse!" We was doing about 80 miles an hour and when it hit, that horse's head was coming right straight at me. And I just fell right down in Doc's lap. The horse ended up on top of the car and was killed—I never could find out who the horse belonged to. That was in 1958. That was an inch of death, right there.

DOES YOUR COUSIN JIMMY SWAGGART STILL TRY TO PERSUADE YOU TO LEAD A LESS SINFUL LIFE?

FeelsGoodLooksGood, Lewiston, MT

Oh, yeah—he tries. He stays on my case pretty good. He gets my attention, but he can't tell me what to do. He doesn't try to stop me playing rock & roll—he just tries to get me to go to church.



"I USED TO BE PRETTY WILD AND WOOLLY—NOT ANYMORE."

Jerry Lee Lewis,
Los Angeles,
September 2006.

WHEN DID YOU LAST GET INTO A FIGHT?

Rodgodhead, Washburn, ND

Oh—we used to get into fights every night. Last fight we got into was, oh boy—out in Colorado or somewhere, round about 1970—he was a giant. We whupped him. Me and Cecil. This guy was sitting at the bar, and he come around to say he was gonna whup my you-know-what. And I said, "No—you just wanna whup Jerry Lee Lewis—that's all you wanna do." He said, "That's right." And he just kept following me out to the car. I could see there was gonna be a fight. I hit him and knocked him down—and he got up faster than he hit the ground. This guy, he must have weighed 250 pounds, and it wasn't fat. He had a sleeveless T-shirt on and arms as big around as Cassius Clay—

impossible to whip. So Cecil jumped out of the car, grabbed him round the neck and threw him on the ground. And I broke his ribs. With my fists.

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU HAD A DRINK?

BigSmellzo, Spokane, WA

It's been a long time since I had a drink—I haven't had any alcohol in years. I would say 12 years ago—it was Scotch. Haig & Haig, I think. That was the end of it. It broke my face out into red spots, all over.

WHAT WAS THE WORST NIGHT OF YOUR LIFE?

FreshPhish, Tillamook, OR

The worst night of my life ... [*thinks for a long time*]. Well, when my wife killed herself. Shawn. About 18 years ago. We was arguing about something, and she went into the restroom, to the medicine cabinet—and took a whole bottle of methadone pills. Now you don't do that—methadone pills, there's no antidote for 'em. And it killed her. That was about the worst experience I went through.

IF YOUR HOUSE WAS BURNING DOWN, AND YOU COULD ONLY RETRIEVE ONE TOBACCO PIPE FROM YOUR COLLECTION OF OVER 1,000, WHICH ONE WOULD IT BE?

SIAllstar, Des Moines, IA

My white pipe—it smokes better than the rest of 'em. It was a gift, I broke it in right, and it smokes right.

HOW WILL YOU CELEBRATE YOUR EIGHTIETH BIRTHDAY?

Perceez_P, New York

I guess I'll celebrate the same way I celebrate the rest of 'em: smokin' my pipe. [BLENDER]



Desperate to court even more controversy, Jerry Lee prepares to eat his cousin/child bride, Myra.

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THE BLENDER BOOK OF AWESOMELY STUPID RECORDS

WHY SETTLE FOR A SINGLE-NECK GUITAR WHEN FIVE WILL DO? WHY SLEEP WHEN YOU CAN DO COKE FOR 18 DAYS? *BLENDER* SALUTES ROCK'S OVERACHIEVERS





Hey, Meat
Loaf—your
breakfast
is ready!



THE HARD CELL
LONGEST PRISON SENTENCE

HOLDERS: **BIG LURCH AND STEADY B**

It doesn't get any longer than life without possibility of parole, which is what aspirant Texan rapper Lurch is serving for killing and partially eating the body of a 21-year-old girl while high on PCP in 2002. Steady B, a Philadelphia rapper, is also jailed for life following a 1996 botched bank robbery in which a police officer was killed, a crime for which his accomplice (and old rhyme buddy) Christopher "Cool C" Roney has been sentenced to death.



SNOW PATROL
BIGGEST COCAINE HABIT

HOLDER: **WAYLON JENNINGS**

"I did more drugs than anyone you ever saw in your life," said the country outlaw in 1994. Until he cleaned up 10 years before that, Jennings had spent 21 years doing drugs and indulging a \$1,500-a-day cocaine habit. Honorable mention goes to Elton John, who at his peak was ingesting cocaine at a rate, he claimed, of "one line every four minutes."

BURGER KING
HIGHEST DAILY FAST-FOOD BILL

HOLDER: **RODNEY JERKINS**

During work on the Spice Girls' third album, *Forever* (2000), roly-poly producer Rodney Jerkins reportedly spent over \$300 a day at McDonald's.



Big Pun:
"Mmm ...
chocolate
bling."

THE NOTORIOUS B.I.G.G.E.S.T.
HEAVIEST RAPPER

HOLDER: **BIG PUN**

"Four hundred pounds, six feet tall, brutally handsome," was Big Pun's optimistic assessment of himself on 2000's posthumously released "My Turn." Until he dropped dead of a heart attack in February that year, the New York rapper's weight fluctuated wildly, topping the scales at nearly 700 pounds. This record looks unlikely to be broken, as the advent of *Celebrity Fit Club* has encouraged such potential contenders as Biz Markie (lost 40 pounds), Young MC (lost 38 pounds) and D12's Bizarre (lost 32 pounds) to trim down rather than mount any sort of serious challenge.



NOT WAITING IN VAIN

LONGEST-DELAYED ALBUM

HOLDER: **SMILE**

Recording on *Smile* began in 1966, before Brian Wilson's drug use, mental deterioration and paranoia—he believed Phil Spector had persuaded Columbia Pictures to make the movie *Seconds* "just to screw with my head"—caused the project to be abandoned. It was eventually released 38 years later, on September 28, 2004.



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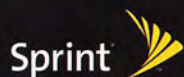


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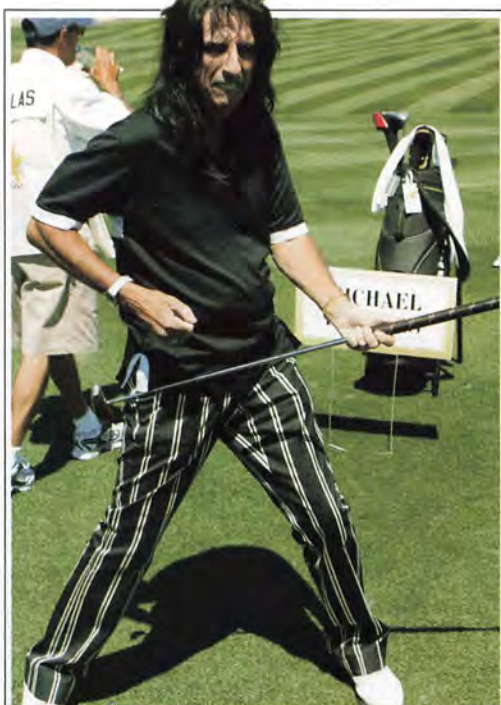
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SANYO



**PUTT SERIOUSLY
LOWEST GOLF HANDICAP**

HOLDER: **ALICE COOPER**

The most-skilled recording artist around the greens is Alice Cooper. The ghoulish rocker took up golf as a substitute for drinking a bottle of whiskey each day. It was worth it: He now tees off at 6:30 every morning, his diligence rewarded with a mere five handicap.



**(A)
SHOW ME THE
MONEY SHOT
FASTEST-
SELLING
SEX TAPE**

HOLDER: **PARIS HILTON**

With about 600,000 copies in circulation, 1998's *Pam and Tommy Lee: Hardcore & Uncensored* remains one of the highest-selling adult films of all time. However, *I Night in Paris* (2004)—depicting heiress and occasional singer Paris Hilton expressing her love for now ex-boyfriend Rick Salomon—notched up unprecedented advance orders estimated at 200,000 and went on to pass the 500,000 mark.



Rick Nielsen: Five times the riffs. Five times the phallic imagery.

**HEAVY FRETTING
MOST NECKS ON A
SINGLE GUITAR**

HOLDER: **RICK NIELSEN**

Since 1980, Cheap Trick's Nielsen has used a custom-made Hamer five-neck guitar. Three have been made, the first weighing a hefty 28 pounds. "I actually play every neck every night," Nielsen says. Though Rick's instrument has 36 strings, Pat Metheny owns a Picasso guitar boasting 42—though with a measly four necks.



(S)

WIDE AWAKE IN AMERICA

**LONGEST
PERIOD
WITHOUT
SLEEP**

HOLDER: **PETE DE FREITAS**

In 1986, the Echo & the Bunnymen drummer was part of a new band, the Sex Gods. Preparing to record in New Orleans, De Freitas took large quantities of acid, cocaine and Ecstasy, staying awake for 18 days straight and breaking from the narcotic ingestion only to take showers. He died in a motorcycle accident three years later.

(D)

BEEF: IT'S WHAT'S FOR
DINNER

**LONGEST-
RUNNING
FEUD**

HOLDERS: **NAS AND JAY-Z**

Simmering since 1996—when Nas declined an invitation to appear on Jay-Z's debut album, *Reasonable Doubt*—this rivalry has sold records while leaving both protagonists alive. After nine years of disputing each other's virility, sexuality (typified by the unflattering Nas freestyle "H to the Omo") and arguing over who, really, was best, the animosity formally ended on October 27, 2005, when Nas joined Jay-Z onstage at the "I Declare War" concert in New Jersey.

(S)

THE NEED FOR SPEED

**FASTEST
RECORDING
OF A NO. 1
SINGLE**

HOLDER: **THE ANIMALS**

According to producer Mickie Most, British R&B outfit the Animals' 1964 breakthrough hit, captured in one take, took just eight minutes to complete: "The first four minutes was the run-through, the second four minutes was the record." The single, "House of the Rising Sun," went on to top the charts on both sides of the Atlantic. The studio costs for the record were rumored to be around the \$5 mark.



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Raise your hands if you mooched off MC Hammer!

I'M WITH STUPID

LARGEST ENTOURAGE

HOLDER: **MC HAMMER**

At the peak of his fame following 1990's "U Can't Touch This," rapper MC Hammer had an entourage that typically numbered 40 people—memorably described on VH1 as "sizable enough to successfully invade Switzerland"—though in all, he employed 200 for total monthly wages of \$500,000. The Hammer declared bankruptcy in 1996.

(\$)

WORD!

MOST EXPENSIVE LYRICS

HOLDER: **BERNIE TAUPIN**

In 1998, nonprofit children's charity the Lund Foundation paid \$400,000 for three sheets of handwritten lyrics and a final printed version of Elton John's "Candle in the Wind 1997." Lyricist Bernie Taupin estimates it took him 90 minutes to come up with the words, which, at about \$266,666 an hour, is nice work if you can get it.

(3)

CIAO, FOR NOW

SHORTEST ITALIAN TOUR

HOLDER: **BOB GELDOF**

After learning that only 45 tickets had been sold for a planned show at Milan's Civic Arena—way short of the venue's 12,000 capacity—on July 21, 2006, former Boomtown Rats singer Bob Geldof refused to appear. "These aren't the right conditions for a concert," he reasoned to a small, disgruntled crowd waiting outside. Another date, set to take place in Rome the following day, was also cancelled due to disappointing ticket sales.

ACTION! JACKSON

MOST EXPENSIVE VIDEO

HOLDER: **"SCREAM"**

At \$7 million, Michael and Janet Jackson's 1995 sci-fi promo was almost triple the cost of the next priciest video, Puff Daddy's "Victory" (1998), which was rumored to be produced for a more modest \$2.7 million. Janet's share of the daily makeup budget alone was a reported \$8,000 a day.



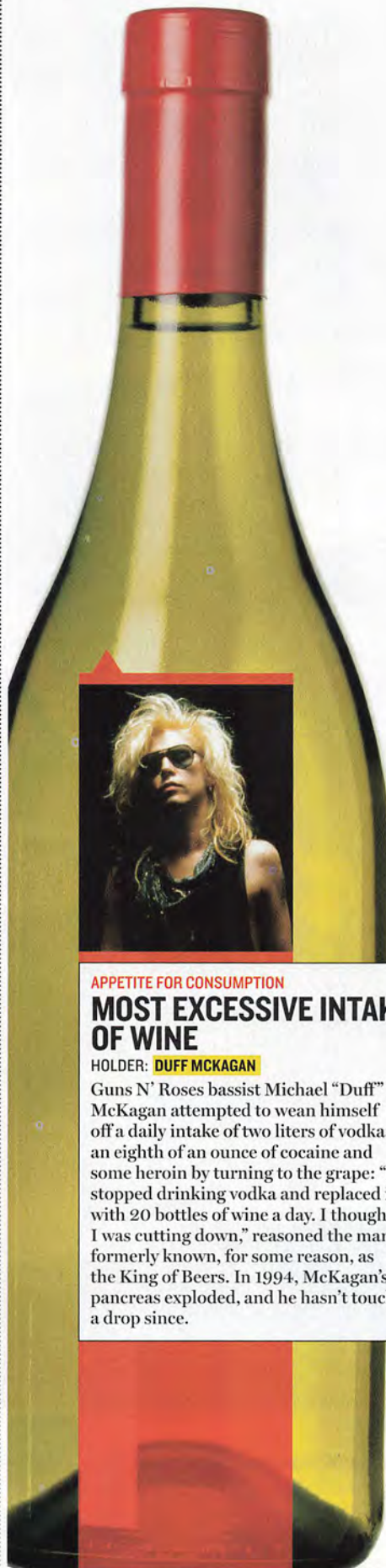
Janet prepares to fire her art dealer.

APPETITE FOR CONSUMPTION

MOST EXCESSIVE INTAKE OF WINE

HOLDER: **DUFF MCKAGAN**

Guns N' Roses bassist Michael "Duff" McKagan attempted to wean himself off a daily intake of two liters of vodka, an eighth of an ounce of cocaine and some heroin by turning to the grape: "I stopped drinking vodka and replaced it with 20 bottles of wine a day. I thought I was cutting down," reasoned the man formerly known, for some reason, as the King of Beers. In 1994, McKagan's pancreas exploded, and he hasn't touched a drop since.



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BACKSTAGE ASS

LONGEST CONTINUALLY SERVING GROUPIE

HOLDER: **CONNIE HAMZY**

Following a topless encounter as a 15-year-old in 1970 with Steppenwolf drummer Jerry Edmonton, "Sweet Connie" Hamzy of Little Rock, Arkansas, built a reputation as the South's most accomplished groupie. Of her chief rivals, Pamela Des Barres is retired and Cynthia Plaster Caster spent much of the '70s on hiatus. Hamzy claims that her hundreds of conquests have included Huey Lewis, Vanilla Ice and Neil Diamond. She is immortalized in Grand Funk Railroad's 1973 song "We're an American Band": "Last night in Little Rock put me in a haze/ Sweet, sweet Connie doin' her act." She continues operating to this day.



STOP THE PRESS

SHORTEST-LIVED VANITY PUBLICATION

HOLDER: **GENE SIMMONS'S TONGUE**

Running for five issues between spring 2002 and summer 2003, the Kiss bassist—who, in issue 3, interviewed himself—described his lifestyle magazine as "like *Playboy* with the clothes on." The life span of Puff Daddy's *Notorious* magazine was similarly brief, though it had been in existence before the Bad Boy mogul got involved. Puffy personally grilled cover star—and future girlfriend—Jennifer Lopez for the September/October 1999 issue, posing such questions as "Do you like me?"



FUZZY LOGIC

MOST VALUABLE BEARD

HOLDERS:

BILLY GIBBONS AND DUSTY HILL

While insurance for irreplaceable celebrity body parts, such as Michael Flatley's \$40 million legs, is common, facial hair has traditionally been seen as a less critical asset. Nonetheless, in 1984, it was rumored that ZZ Top guitarist Billy Gibbons and bass player Dusty Hill declined an offer of \$1 million each from Gillette to shave off their beards for a television commercial. "Can't do it, simply because what's underneath 'em is too ugly," reasoned Gibbons.



FREEBIRD!

LONGEST MUSICAL PERFORMANCE

HOLDER: **"AS SLOW AS POSSIBLE," JOHN CAGE**

Written by composer Cage in 1985, this was originally a 20-minute piano piece. However, a performance begun in Halberstadt, Germany, on September 5, 2001, is scheduled to last for 639 years, with the next note change coming in July 2008. "I have to accept the distinct possibility that I shall die before the concert is over," said organizer Michael Betzle.



LOOK OUT BELOW!

HIGHEST STAGE DIVE

HOLDER: **SID WILSON**

Touring the U.K. in 2000, the Slipknot DJ threw himself from a 30-foot-high balcony during a date in Wolverhampton. Wilson was unscathed, but the girl he landed on—19-year-old Lyndsey Pearce—was hospitalized with a concussion. A contrite Wilson visited her bedside, but, according to fan sites, drummer Joey Jordison responded to the local council's proposed ban on the group by offering to send them "shit in a box."



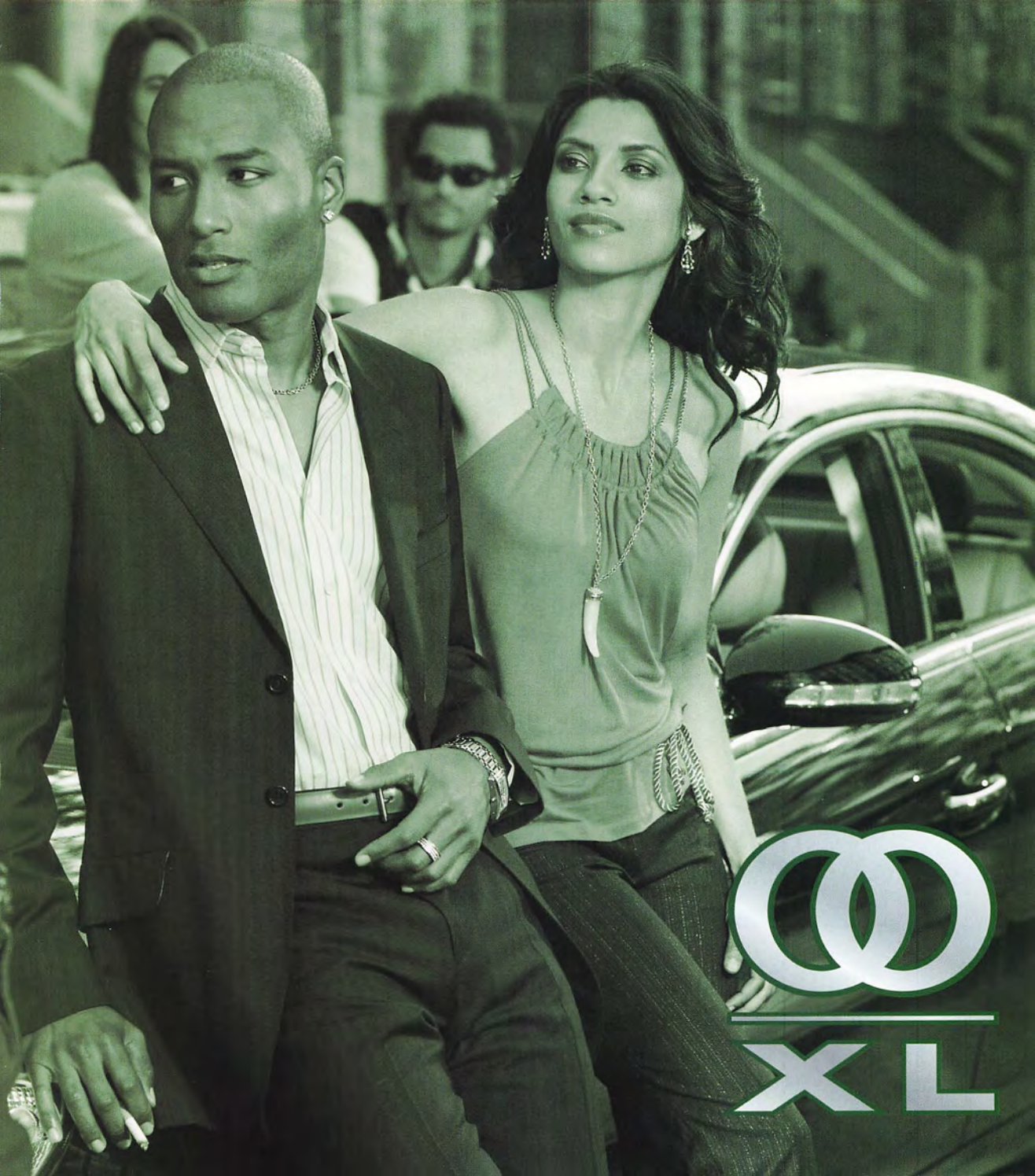
THE F-PLAN

MOST OBSCENITIES ON A HIP-HOP RECORD

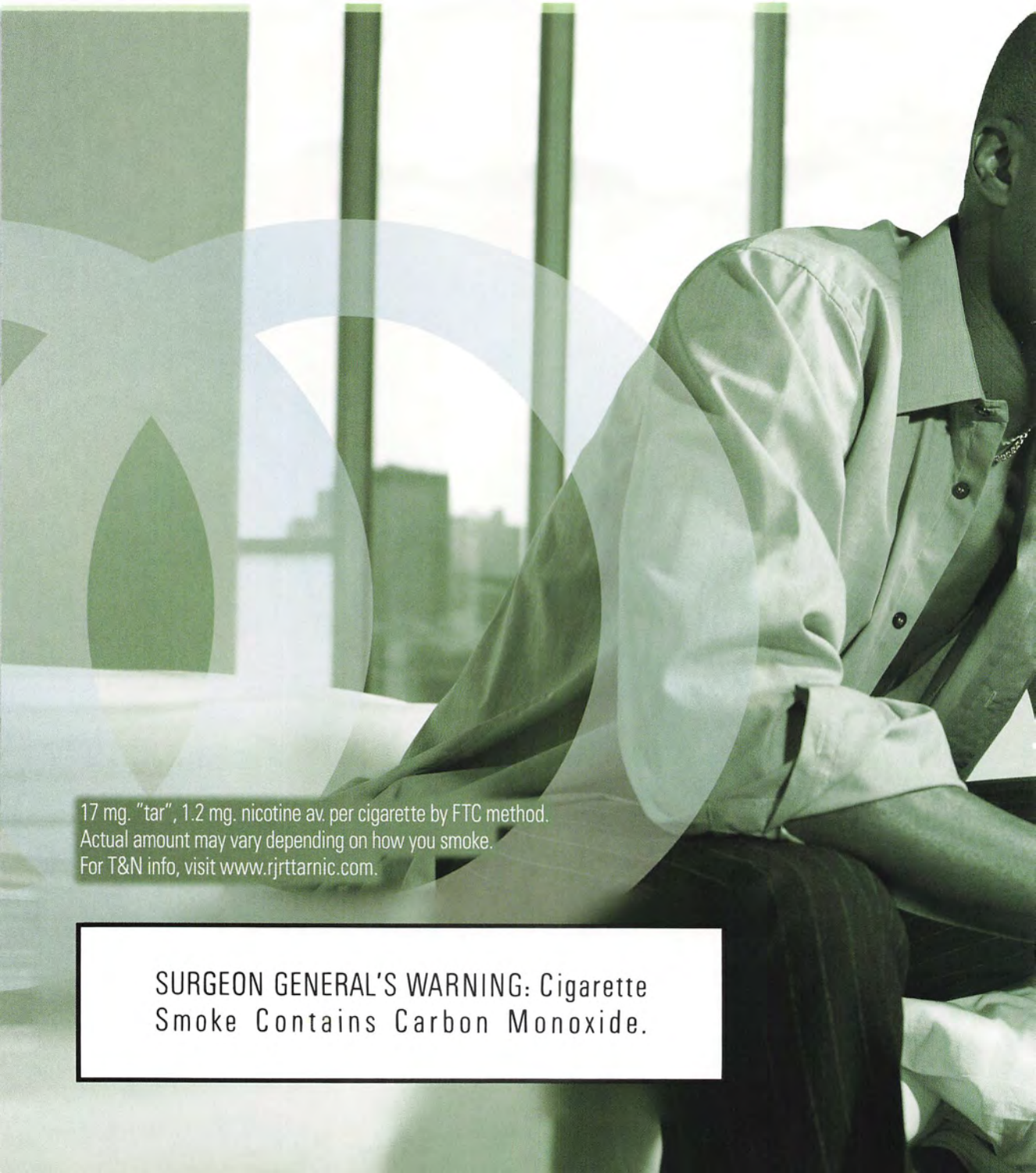
HOLDER: **INSANE CLOWN POSSE**

Midway through "Fuck the World," a nihilistic song from the Detroit rap duo's 1999 album *The Amazing Jeckel Brothers*, Shaggy 2 Dope claims that "in this song I say fuck 93 times," though the actual tally is 96. It also includes two uses of the word *shit* and one *cock* during its 3:43 running time. A clean version is also available.





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THREE (HUNDRED) PEAT!

MOST CONSECUTIVE LISTENS TO STARSHIP'S

"WE BUILT THIS CITY"

HOLDER: **BLENDER**

In 2004, we named this 1985 smash single the Worst Song of All Time. Now, in the name of setting our own awesomely stupid world record, we put its rank stinkitude to the test: For 24 hours straight, *Blender*'s Russ Heller listened to "We Built This City" nonstop. Behold the diary of a madman ...

6:30 A.M.

I am about to endure a day of uninterrupted public torture. A listening chamber has been installed in a downtown-Manhattan Best Buy, poised to unleash the worst 4 minutes and 55 seconds ever recorded. Three hundred times in a row. I hail a cab. "But, sir!" the cabbie cries. "It's too early for going inside the store!" True indeed, Piotr. But today is no ordinary Friday.



"Oxygen ... low.
Lungs ... full
of ... Starship."

THE
AWESOMELY
STUPIDEST
RECORD
EVER!

JEREMY LIEBMAN

7:55 A.M.

I'm led into a 6' x 6' x 8' Plexiglas booth, furnished with a blue plush recliner. There's a coffee table piled with Red Bull and Doritos. At 8 on the dot, two tall speakers come alive. The synths are vile. The beat is jaunty. The lyrics hurt. I am Jack Bauer, and this is the longest day of my life.

1:00 P.M.

I have listened to the worst song ever 60 times now. I'm keeping track with tally marks on the wall. Most customers do a double take as they pass. Some poke their heads in to ask me how I go to the bathroom. Mercifully, *Blender* has granted me periodic wazz-break amnesty.

5:40 P.M.

One hundred spins down and my endurance is holding up. This is like the Tour de France with better snacks. Are the massive quantities of caffeine in my system a doping scandal waiting to happen?

8:00 P.M.

I realize that Best Buy will be closing for the night. I will be alone in here with five Red Bulls and this song. Maybe this was a "poor life choice." All taurine and no sleep makes Russ a dull boy.

1:00 A.M.

Call it Stockholm syndrome or amphetamine psychosis, but the chorus is kinda awesome. Imagine a city built not of brick and mortar but of Aqua Net and keyboards!

11:00 P.M.

Getting out of the chair to mark the wall every five minutes blows. So I've taped a Magic Marker to the end of a broom handle. The "Lazy Stick" enables me to stay in the recliner indefinitely. Patent pending.

10:00 P.M.

The store is closed. I found a wrestler action figure outside my booth. His muscles bulge menacingly, but he has kind eyes. He will buttress my sanity in these lonely hours—the Wilson to my Tom Hanks. Although if my plastic companion magically comes to life, *Mannequin*-style, I am going to pass on the sweet lovin'.

9:04 P.M.

At 144 plays, I am only six plays shy of the number of letters in the ingredient listing on the labels of three bottles of Dasani water. It will not occur to me until later to wonder why water should have ingredients. Yes, I am proto-insane.

2:00 A.M.

Two hundred plays. I take that last entry back. This song is trying to kill me.

5:00 A.M.

Can't sleep. Grace Slick will eat me. Fifteen minutes ago, Musclebound Wilson offered me a Reese's Peanut Butter Cup. He is considerate like that. He laughs at my jokes, even when they are not funny. I like him.

6:00 A.M.

This isn't the worst song ever. It is the worst 10 songs ever.

8:00 A.M.

With remarkably little fanfare, I am turned loose. The silence is deafening. Clutching the Lazy Stick, I stumble into the sunlight and try not to get hit by a car. Where is my bed?

SWEET
FREEDOM!



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DONNA SUMMER

"Love to Love You Baby"

HOW AN ASPIRING DISCO DIVA AND AN ITALIAN SVENGALI TURNED ORGASMIC BLISS INTO A WORLDWIDE HIT (By Ben Sisario)

> IN A STUDIO in Munich, Donna Summer lay on the floor in the dark, preparing to moan her way into history.

It was early 1975, and Summer was still 17 minutes of ecstasy away from becoming the sex queen of disco. The Boston-born gospel-trained singer had been living in Europe for about eight years, doing musical theater and background vocals, and she'd recently begun working with an ambitious Italian producer named Giorgio Moroder; Moroder had a few hits under his belt, but he was looking for something bigger.

What they ended up with was "Love to Love You Baby," a trailblazing early-disco hit that virtually invented the extended remix and forever linked the sound of pulsating dance beats and female sexual pleasure. But at first, Summer was just an understudy: "It was supposed to be a demo for someone else," she tells *Blender*.

Inspired by "Je T'Aime ... Moi Non Plus"—the heavy-breathing 1969 Serge Gainsbourg and Jane Birkin duet—

Moroder asked Summer to think of a racy song idea, and she came up with a sweet line: "I love to love you." Moroder banged out a simple mid-tempo funk groove and brought Summer in the next day. She sang the song's few lyrics in a girlish semi-whisper meant to evoke Marilyn Monroe. Then she filled out the track with murmurs of fleshly joy.

The understudy had earned herself a starring role. Summer and Moroder returned to the studio with British producer Pete Bellotte to cut a three-and-a-half-minute single for Casablanca Records.

Then Casablanca president Neil Bogart did what record execs do best—complained that it didn't quite work. His reasoning? It wasn't long enough.

In an inspired bit of field research, Summer recalls, "Neil played the record when he was making love. He said, 'You know what? I wish I could have a good 20 minutes of this song.'"

Moroder reassembled the musicians from the session and ingeniously stitched in a series of variations and new parts that ballooned the track to a whopping 17 minutes. When Summer had trouble getting back into character, Moroder cleared everyone from the studio, turned down the lights and had her lie down. She nailed it "in one take," Moroder says.

"Love to Love You Baby" became an erotic epic. As wah-wah guitars, a strutting bass and warbling keyboards—'70s-porn staples—weave in and out, Summer vividly simulates orgasms. The music itself climaxes repeatedly, setting the stage for every woman who's given herself to a groove since, from Madonna to Björk to Beyoncé—who paid the song tribute in 2003's "Naughty Girl."

"It has to have a certain dynamic," Moroder explains, "like Spielberg has one effect every seven minutes in his movies."

The song was banned by the BBC—whose censors counted 23 "orgasms"—and denounced by the Rev. Jesse Jackson. But, of course, the controversy only helped, and the song hit No. 2 pop in the U.S.

Summer, a born-again Christian since 1979, says she's been surprised by the reaction the song provokes, despite its steamy vibe: She recalls many concerts where undergarments have sailed onstage during the song. "I thought that was a little much," she says. "You have to have self-control." [BLENDER]



Vital Statistics

Song "Love to Love You Baby"

Artist Donna Summer

Label Casablanca

Performers Donna Summer, vocals; Molly Moll, Nick Woodland and Pete Bellotte, guitars; Mike Thatcher and Giorgio Moroder, keyboards; Dave King, bass; Martin Harrison, drums; Franz Deuber, strings; Bernie Brocks, Giorgio Moroder, percussion; Lucy, Betsy and Gitta, backing vocals

Written by Pete Bellotte, Giorgio Moroder and Donna Summer

Producers Pete Bellotte and Giorgio Moroder

Chart debut December 6, 1975

Highest chart position 2

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Steven Tyler just announced he has hepatitis C. How do you get that?

Marshall Tish, Muncie, Indiana

Our medical knowledge is pretty much limited to Dr. Dre and "I Wanna Be Sedated," but we'll give this a shot. Hepatitis C is an infectious viral disease transmitted through blood-to-blood contact such as transfusions, I.V. drug use and (sometimes) unprotected sex. An estimated 4 million people in the United States are infected. Steven Tyler was diagnosed with hep C three years ago and combated the disease with 11 months of interferon therapy; he says it's now "nonexistent in my bloodstream." Left untreated, however, the hepatitis C virus can cause inflammation of the liver, cirrhosis and even cancer.

Tyler isn't the only rocker to contract the potentially fatal disease. Grateful Dead bassist Phil Lesh had to undergo a liver transplant in 1998 as a result of chronic hepatitis, and country singer Naomi Judd was forced to retire in 1991 when she tested positive. Kid Rock's new bride, Pamela Anderson, also has it and says she became infected after sharing a tattoo needle with ex-husband Tommy Lee (who denies having the virus). Sounds like we need a telethon, stat!

What was the first music video to cost a million dollars?

Nadine Valchek, Los Angeles

The big surprise is who it's not: Michael Jackson. The profligate pop king came pretty close in 1983, when he spent a then-unheard-of \$800,000 on his wildly influential video for "Thriller." (Accounting for inflation, that would be about a million and a half today.) And Jacko can also claim two of the most expensive videos of all time: 1995's "Scream," featuring sister Janet, set in a futuristic space world that cost \$7 million to create, and the 11-minute "Black or White," from 1991, where state-of-the-art face-morphing effects and a probably less-expensive Macaulay Culkin cameo added up to an alleged \$4 million tab.

Plenty of artists have crossed the threshold since, from the Backstreet Boys to Mariah Carey. But the Neil Armstrong of the seven-figure video was none other Ol' Parachute Pants, MC Hammer, with "Here Comes the Hammer." Released in January 1991, the nine-minute clip—featuring time-travel, diaper-wearing



Mike D to Screech: "Yo, can you get me Jessie Spano's digits?"

I just heard about a sex tape starring **DUSTIN DIAMOND**, a.k.a. Screech from *Saved by the Bell*, and it reminded me of an old rumor: Are he and **MIKE D** really brothers?

R.P. Dominguez, Meridian, Mississippi

First of all, can we say: ewww?!

But to answer your question, no, Screech and the Beastie Boys' Mike D are not brothers. We can sort of see how the rumor got started: They share the same last name (Diamond); they have somewhat similar features ("like our noses," Dustin has said); they're both part of famous trios (the Beasties for Mike; Zack, Slater and Screech for Dustin).

But it's disproved by overwhelming evidence to the contrary, such as the 12-year age difference between Mike, 41, and Dustin, 29, as well as the fact that they do not, technically speaking, have the same father or mother. "It makes sense," Dustin Diamond said in a 2002 interview, "but it's all coincidence."

While we're clearing up rock family ties, allow us to set the record straight on two other rumors: Neil Diamond is not dad to either of them and the geek from *The Wonder Years* ain't Marilyn Manson.

demons and a cameo by James Brown—topped out at an estimated \$1.4 million. Do you know how many gold-plated faucets that would have bought?!

My friend tells me Bob Dylan had a brief second career as a hip-hop artist. No way!

Noah Drake, Concord, New Hampshire

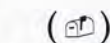
Some people say that Bob Dylan invented hip-hop in the '60s, with stream-of-consciousness Beat raps like "Subterranean Homesick Blues." But most of those people are old white dudes who wear socks with sandals and have to be reminded to take their medicine, so pay them no mind.

Indeed, though, the folk O.G. did—at Kurtis Blow's request—make a guest appearance on Blow's 1986 album *Kingdom Blow*. And in his 2004 memoir, *Chronicles: Volume One*, Dylan tells how his dalliance with Blow put him on to all sorts of hip-hop. "Ice-T, Public Enemy, N.W.A., Run-D.M.C.," he writes. "These guys definitely weren't stand-

ing around bullshitting. They were beating drums, tearing it up, hurling horses over cliffs. They were all poets and knew what was going on. ... The kind of music that [I was] making was archaic." Recognize, bitches!



Bob Dylan, on the lookout for Soy Bombs.



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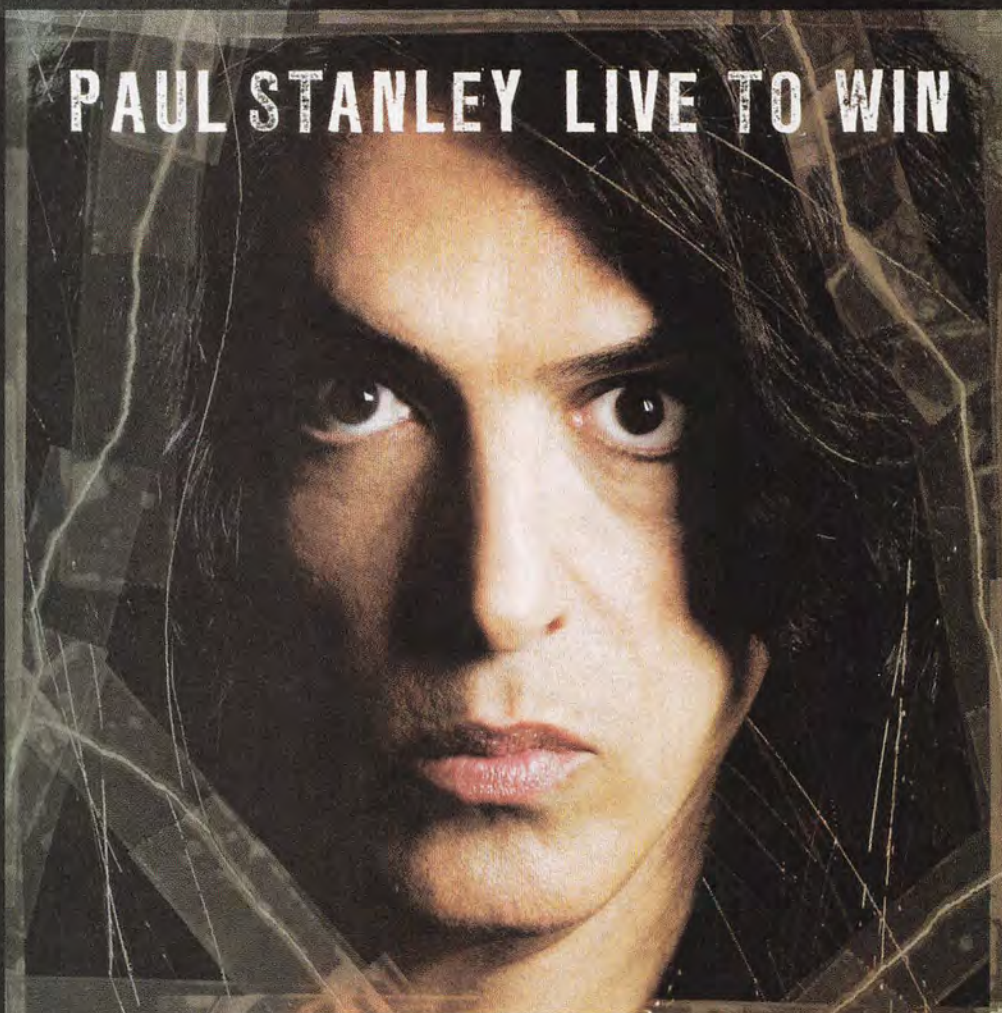
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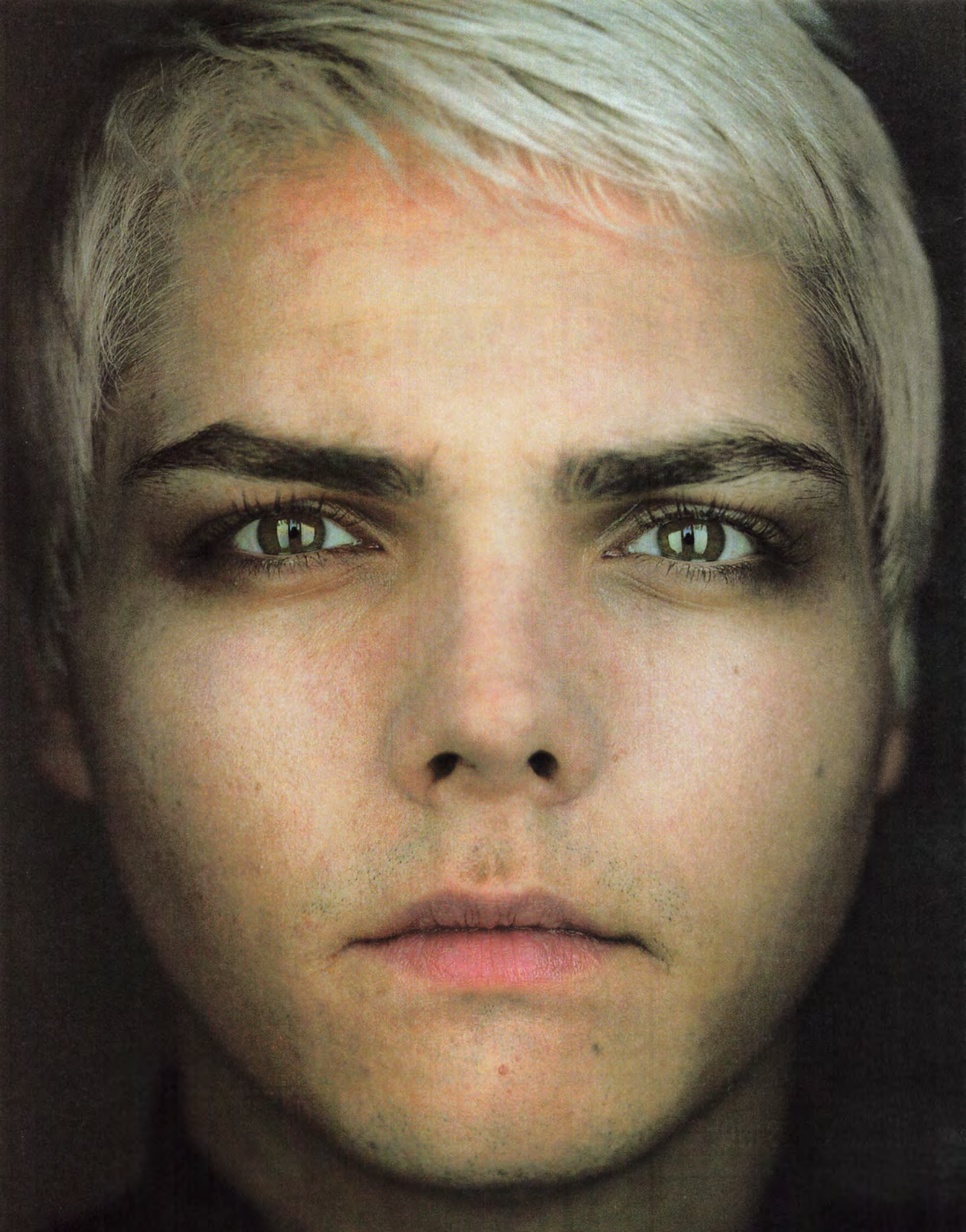
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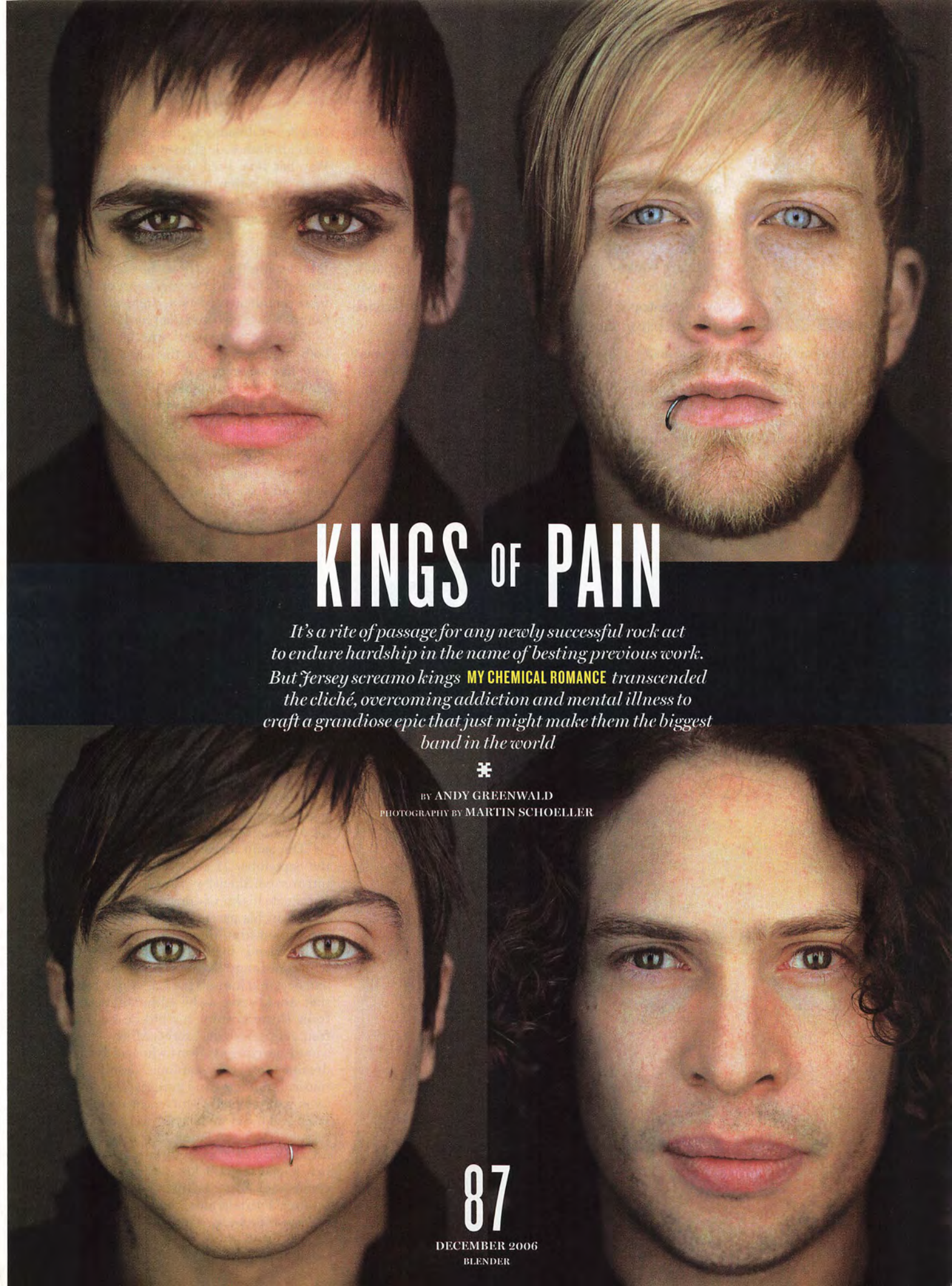
GET YOURS

Thousands of Possibilities



Blond ambition: Gerard Way.

Next page, clockwise from top left: Mikey Way, Bob Bryar, Ray Toro, Frank Iero.



KINGS OF PAIN

*It's a rite of passage for any newly successful rock act to endure hardship in the name of besting previous work. But Jersey screamo kings **MY CHEMICAL ROMANCE** transcended the cliché, overcoming addiction and mental illness to craft a grandiose epic that just might make them the biggest band in the world*



BY ANDY GREENWALD
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARTIN SCHOELLER

M

ilan: the shopping capital of the world. The ancient winding streets in the shadow of the magnificent Duomo are home to some of the most exclusive—and expensive—designers on the planet. Armani and Versace are there, not far from Dior, with its frosted-glass staircase (and equally frosty clerks). Across the way is Prada, where a display of thousand-euro walking sticks looms menacingly over the register. The Dolce & Gabbana boutique is so deliriously over-the-top it has what appears to be a self-service martini bar in the changing area.

Lost in the middle of this sartorial madness is Gerard Way, newly blond frontman for My Chemical Romance, striding down the stone boulevards in a tight leather jacket and skinny black jeans, a cigarette clutched in his fingers. As usual, Way is a man on a mission. Also per usual, his goals are lofty, his demands high. What could our gothic superhero be in search of now? A leather cape, perhaps? A utility belt? A giant

inflatable pig? Actually, no: "I just want some casual clothes," he says in his harsh Jersey rasp. "Some fucking corduroys. Something normal."

Normal is not a word usually associated with My Chemical Romance—especially one month before the release of the band's dizzying third album, *The Black Parade*. But it does seem oddly appropriate: After a spectacular five-year evolution from dampened

New Jersey dreamer to platinum-certified, makeup-slathered glam-punk visionary, Way has now shed the mascara, gotten clean and gotten mortally serious. Even though *The Black Parade* is a sprawling, high-risk concept record about death, featuring strings, horns, power ballads and gas-masked characters with names like "Mother War" (played by—who else?—Liza Minnelli), he's never seemed more calm or more confident. Ambition, it appears, suits Gerard Way even better than corduroy.

"Making this record was like somebody holding a gun at this band and we were just laughing at it," he says excitedly, exhaling a plume of smoke. "We lost our fear because we felt that no matter what—if we were destroyed or killed, or if somebody did pull that trigger on us—we'd only become stronger. Somehow we'd become more powerful!" His eyes flash madness, and he stubs out a cigarette, and then Gerard Way, the fearless, self-appointed savior of rock & roll, officially abandons his quest for civilian garb and ducks into the nearest Games Workshop to ogle space orc battle sets.



CLIFTON, NEW JERSEY: the capital of absolutely nothing at all. A blue-collar town due west of New York City, Clifton, on this September day, is almost purposefully ugly. The sky is a gunmetal gray above the Tick Tock Diner ("Since 1948 New Jersey's Premier Diner-Restaurant!"), located across the street from a cemetery and in a tangle of highway Möbius loops, dead-end motels and dead ends. It was here that the members of My Chemical Romance hung out before and after every practice, downing coffee, sucking on cigarettes and dreaming of taking over the world.

The band formed in late 2001, after the September 11 attacks compelled the introverted, then-24-year-old Gerard to reevaluate his life of drawing unpublished comics in his parents' basement. Taking inspiration from the punk shows put on by his friends in the band Thursday, he wrote one song ("Skylines and Turnstiles") and declared himself the leader of a band that would serve as his ultimate escape: from shyness, from his cul-de-sac life, from Jersey. Younger brother Mikey—then a hard-partying extrovert who had always dreamed of rock stardom, despite no musical training—and guitarist Ray Toro (who had bonded with Gerard over *Star Wars* and heavy metal riffs) were the first recruits. Guitarist Frank Iero, the youngest and most extravagantly tattooed member, joined later. "I knew Gerard as the comic-book artist, as Mikey's creepy older brother," Iero tells me at the Tick Tock over an egg-and-cheese sandwich. "But then



My Chemical Romance will *not* be boxed in. Except for right here.

STYLING: MARIAM MALAKPOUR FOR MARGARET MALDONADO AGENCY; SET DESIGN: MARGARET MALDONADO AGENCY; GROOMING: SEARON MCGRATH FOR MARGARET MALDONADO AGENCY; STYLING ASSISTANCE: HOLLAND INGERSOLL AND MOSES MORENO; GROOMING ASSISTANCE: COLETTE MORRALES; CLOTHING, FROM LEFT: SUIT: J. LINDENBERG; SUIT: JEAN PAUL GAULTIER; SUIT: NUMBER (NINE); SUIT: DIOR HOMME; BLAZER AND SHIRT: CLOAK.

as soon as I saw their first show—they were drunk because they couldn't stand to be in front of people—I was like, "This band's amazing!" (Drummer Bob Bryar joined in 2004, replacing original member Matt Pelissier.)

Offstage, the young band was still the same group of comic-book-collecting misfits that kept entirely to themselves. But onstage, Gerard was a leather-jacketed madman who would scream profanities at the crowd and wave his middle finger like a baton. "I always felt like the world was way too tough for me when I was a little kid," he says. "But something about being in this band makes me feel tough." Gerard had also quickly learned to drown his inhibitions in alcohol—and later, in cocaine—and he hid his cherubic, decidedly un-rock-star face behind layers of makeup and a mop of greasy hair, while hiding his personal demons in lyrics that focused on actual demons: vampires, blood-spattered lovers trekking through hell and other outlandish conceits.

"Even when they first started, they commanded a crowd as if they were already a huge rock band," says Jared Kaufman, an editor at absolutepunk.net, a popular fan-run punk Web site, and a longtime champion of the band. "They were using their band—their energy, their passion—as a medium to take over a scene."

The group's first album—2002's rough-and-ready *I Brought You My Bullets, You Brought Me Your Love*—got them labeled "screamo" and got them signed to Warner Bros., but it was 2004's double-platinum *Three Cheers for Sweet Revenge* that revealed their quirky passions: that glorious, Queen-y guitar solo popping out of nowhere in the rant "I'm Not Okay (I Promise)," the goth Busby Berkeley video for "Helena," "People made fun of us!" sputters Mikey Way. "Emo was kids in recreation shirts and tight blue jeans, and we came out wearing makeup; we played hardcore shows at VFW halls, and Gerard dressed like Ziggy fucking Stardust. Everybody wanted to hate us. But we always had in our mind that we wanted to transcend this. We wanted to change the world."

And in a way, they soon did: All the things that set them apart from their peers—the costumes, the cinematic videos, the Max Factor shipments—quickly became prevalent (see: Panic! At the Disco and Aiden, a face-paint-and-eyeliner band from Seattle so blatantly in debt to MCR it's almost cute). "I'm actually glad when people cheapen what we do, when it becomes another cliché of 'the scene,'" Gerard says. "It forces you to become more direct. The first song on the new record—'The End'—is the end. We're resigning from the scene;

⌘ GREAT CHEMICAL ROMANCES

Throughout the ages, magic happens when two or more elements get together

(H₂O)

Together, we call them: **WATER**

Hydrogen has had its share of trouble, especially with the Hindenburg disaster in 1937. So thank heaven for the stabilizing influence of oxygen. Some say oxygen is overexposed—it seems we can't move without running into it—but with its life partner, hydrogen, this is a matchup that, while at times may be icy or steamy, is so vital.

(C₂H₆O)

Together, we call them: **ALCOHOL**

No one knows exactly when this threesome first hooked up, though it's been going strong for over 9,000 years. There are few people who haven't got a tale to tell about these sweethearts, as their intoxicating presence regularly prompts regrettable mischief at weddings and office parties. Often moving in celebrity circles, they've recently been spotted out with Mel Gibson and Paris Hilton.

(N₂O)

Together, we call them: **NITROUS OXIDE**

Has it really only been about 230 years since this relationship was brought out into the open by English chemist Joseph Priestly? After knocking around at Grateful Dead concerts for years—where they were known as "laughing gas" or "hippie crack"—this pair seems to have set its sights on Hollywood, notably making a scene-stealing guest appearance in 2003's *2 Fast 2 Furious*.



"Eureka! The most delicious turkey basting ever invented."

(C₂₀H₂₅N₃O)

Together, we call them: **LSD**

Synthesized in 1938 by Swiss scientist Dr. Albert Hofmann, the laboratory speed-date origins of this liaison haven't diminished its potency in any way. Despite playing ball with the CIA for mind-control experiments in the '50s and '60s, they were banned in the U.S. in 1967. Their love survived underground, where they socialized with the Beatles, Ozzy Osbourne and Dennis Hopper.

(C₄H₁₀FO₂P)

Together, we call them: **SARIN**

As if phosphorus wasn't mad, bad and dangerous to know alone, when German scientists introduced it to the rest of the gang in 1938, the result was a nerve agent 500 times more toxic than cyanide. Outlawed in 1993, the star-crossed charmers fell in with the religious cult Aum Shinrikyo and made headlines for killing 12 people on the Tokyo subway two years later. *Ben Mitchell*

we're not part of what you wanted. We're gonna be what we want to be."



BACK IN MILAN, the sun is setting over the enormous terrace of Gerard's hotel room. He's in the middle of a European press tour, and despite his frequent proclamations that My Chemical Romance have constantly chosen the hard road over the easy money—they've made a habit of saying no to things other emo bands have gorged on, such as advertisements and lucrative publishing deals—he's clearly gained a taste for the finer things. The hotel is one of Milan's fanciest—and priestly—and his first order

of business upon arriving was to upgrade to a master suite, which now serves as the opulent setting for a long talk about fear; specifically, the creeping, paralyzing kind that has plagued him his whole life and nearly undid the band during the recording of *The Black Parade*. Spread out in front of him are the essentials: the ever-present cigarettes and countless bottles of Diet Coke and sparkling water. Near-constant intake of nicotine and caffeine is the only vice that remains in Gerard's life after bottoming out on booze, pills and blow in 2004. "What we achieve keeps me sober," he says. "I know the minute I touch a drink again is the minute I lose everything that I've got." >>

POP QUIZ

ARE YOU THE SAVIOR OF THE BROKEN, THE BEATEN AND THE DAMNED?

Take our test to see if you're the goth-rock messiah or merely suffering from a mild God complex

- 1 YOUR FATHER TAKES YOU INTO THE CITY TO SEE A MARCHING BAND. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?
 - a From now on, everything you wear must have epaulets
 - b You gain a new appreciation of the tuba player's ability to hold down the bottom
 - c You eat too much cotton candy and throw up on the ride home
- 2 WHEN YOU HEAR THE TERM "CULT OF PERSONALITY," YOU THINK OF:
 - a Iconic demagogues like Mao, Stalin and Kim Jong Il
 - b The riff from that Living Colour song
 - c Checking Wikipedia to see what "cult of personality" means
- 3 WILL YOU DEFEAT THEM, YOUR DEMONS AND ALL THE NON-BELIEVERS?
 - a Duh
 - b If there's time between tour dates and press commitments
 - c Those guys? No way
- 4 YOU'RE IN A CROWD AND SOMEONE YELLS, "OH, MY GOD!" YOU:
 - a Wink at the person and say, "You called?"
 - b Turn to the person and ask if they're OK
 - c Run away as fast as you can, bawling
- 5 WHERE ARE YOU FROM?
 - a A world that sends you reeling from decimated dreams
 - b Kearny, New Jersey
 - c Newark, New Jersey

IF YOU ANSWERED:

- a You are, in fact, the savior of the broken, the beaten and the damned
- b You're the kid brother of the savior of the broken, the beaten and the damned
- c Girlfriend, you are the broken, the beaten and the damned

On Gerard's journey from stage-fright-addicted addict to world-beating frontman he has had two very different mentors. The first was Bert McCracken, the troubled singer for the Utah screamo band the Used. While touring together in 2003, Bert and Gerard became ferocious party buddies, wasting night after night draining hotel room minibars and bullshitting (a numbing existence eulogized to perfection on *The Black Parade's* "The Sharpest Lives"). For a time, the two were inseparable—joining each other onstage, name-checking each other in lyrics and even collaborating on a charity cover of "Under Pressure." But when Way cleaned up, the relationship soured and soon McCracken was trash-talking MCR. The last time Gerard saw McCracken was at the San Diego stop of the Warped Tour 2005. "It was really unfortunate," says Way. "We were about to take the stage and he was standing with a megaphone trying to get kids not to watch us. We just hit the feedback and drowned him out." (McCracken declined a request for comment.)

Mentor number two in the evolution of Gerard Way was a more stable figure: Green Day's Billie Joe Armstrong, who took Gerard under his wing when MCR opened a leg of the *American Idiot* tour. "We had bought these toy lightsabers for Green Day's kids," Gerard remembers, "but we kept fucking around with them in the parking lot. So one night Billie and I had a lightsaber battle for fun—he's a total red-lightsaber, Vader guy, by the way—and we talked about what happened to them after *Dookie*. He said the biggest mistake they had made was to be angry about the success. What I got from him was personal: Don't hold back; be what you are and don't be ashamed of it. Don't be afraid to take it by the balls."

The change in Way's attitude was sudden and dramatic. The hours he once spent either building up or sleeping off a high he now filled with new projects: *The Umbrella Academy*, Way's new comic-book series, is due in 2007 from Dark Horse Comics, and he's been in discussions with Scholastic to write horror stories for young audiences. The songs took a left turn as well when the band gathered in early 2006 to write in New York City (all of the members still live in Jersey, save for Bryar, who is a native Chicagoan, and Gerard, who is currently homeless—hence the fancy hotels). "The benefit of writing so much on the road when every other band was partying was that we got *Revenge* part two out of our systems," says Gerard. Instead, the group plunged headfirst into bizarre explorations that paid homage to their real idols—Billy Corgan, Freddie Mercury and especially Dr. Frank N. Furter from *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (*Black Parade's* "Momma," a gypsy-punk rave-up, is riotous evidence of the latter). Armstrong recommended *American*



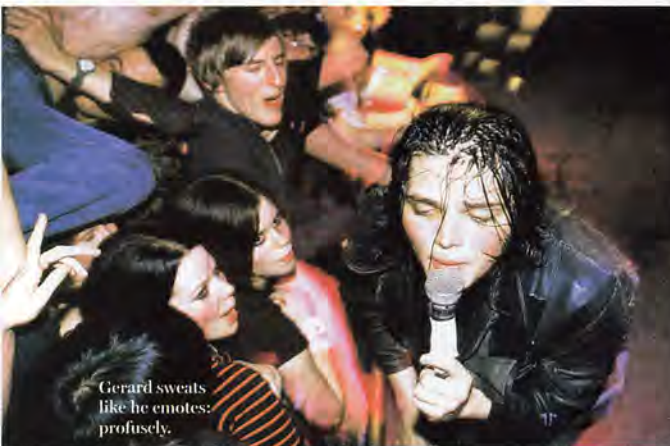
Idiot producer Rob Cavallo as the man best suited to translating MCR's lofty ideas to disc, and the two parties hit it off immediately. "I came in and told them, 'Let's push it as far as we can go,'" Cavallo says. "That really opened their eyes. Once they had that kind of freedom they loved it."

The band decamped to Los Angeles and took up residence in the Paramour Estate, an old, purportedly haunted mansion in the hills above the trendy Silver Lake neighborhood. Time and money were no object, and spirits were high. But suddenly an unexpected crack appeared in the band's armor, and for a few weeks in Los Angeles, My Chemical Romance didn't exist at all.



HAIR ARTFULLY LACQUERED and with bright-blue limited-edition *Tron* Velcro sneakers on his feet, Mikey Way is gleeful as an 8-year-old on Christmas morning in Toy Tokyo, a Manhattan store devoted to all things tiny, kitschy and Japanese. Torn between the wall of Transformers and a shelf of limited-edition Lego figures, Mikey—glasses-free and muscled for the first time in his life—doesn't seem to be the sort of person who could have any problems at all, let alone the kind that nearly derailed his band's career. In fact, it had always been good ol' Mikey Way who'd saved the band during the tough times—as older brother Gerard puts it, Mikey is "everyone's kid brother," the happy-go-lucky goofball who brightens any van ride or photo shoot. But sometime last year, the fun stopped.

"People would see me onstage standing still and think that I was just the dude that chills in the back," he later explains between wolfish bites of a spicy tuna roll. "Little did they know I was having crippling anxiety attacks onstage." It started as a nagging self-doubt—about his musical ability, about his role in the band—but during the late 2005 headlining tour it ballooned out of control. "Here I was, I finally had everything I'd struggled for my whole life, and it wasn't fun anymore. I was standing on the stage look-



Gerard sweats like he emotes: profusely.



MCR: Snazzy dressers, lousy real estate agents.

ing out, not enjoying it at all."

Mikey stitched himself together with drinks and pills during the writing of *The Black Parade*—and sought solace in the company of his new fiancée, Alicia Simmons—but inside it was worsening. "It was too much stimulus at once," he says. "I never had a chance to come to grips with anything—my grandmother dying, my father having a [non-fatal] heart attack on our tour bus. I was a complete mess." The band's choice of accommodations in Los

Back at the house, though, things fell apart. "I became extremely edgy and angry," Gerard says. "We had something we wanted to bring to the world and we were basically forced to stop creating it. It was as if a plug had been pulled. It was a really dark period." Adds Toro, "It started out as anger towards Mikey, because, like, doesn't he know that he is causing things to come to a standstill? But that was completely the wrong reaction to have—we were just upset and confused. He needed time to get better."

A record that had begun with such confidence suddenly seemed doomed. "When we saw it happen to one of us, it opened us up to fear and pressure in a big way," Gerard admits. "It started to seep in and rise up, and the next thing you know you're waist-deep in the fear. Are we gonna make a shit record? Are we crazy? Are we gonna break up?"

One night about two weeks into Mikey's absence, Gerard wandered down to the basement in his bathrobe to find Toro absentmindedly noodling with a song-scrap titled "The Saddest Music in the World." "Gerard looked defeated," says Toro. "But then he picked up a guitar, and we started writing and suddenly we knew that things were going to be OK." A once-directionless (and chorus-free) song took on a new life as Gerard poured all of his anxieties—about his band, his career and his brother's health—into a powerful and surprisingly direct refrain: "I am not afraid to keep on living." The result was "Famous Last Words"—*The Black Parade*'s last song, second single and crowning moment. "Right away I felt like I was singing about the thing I was most afraid of," Gerard says. "It felt like what it meant to be in this band, it felt like it was about Mikey, and it felt like it was about our lives, thinking of yourself as despicable or hated."

Mikey eventually returned to the house—as a commuter—heard the new

song and fell in love with his band again. "When I came back it became triumphant," he says. "And 'Famous Last Words' is the anthem." New songs were quickly written—including the stark ballad "Cancer"—and a vision began to coalesce. A strange, 3-year-old herky-jerky number called "The Five of Us Are Dying" metamorphosed into the first single, "Welcome to the Black Parade." "It was a snowball effect of contagious madness," Cavallo says. "It's insanely gleeful," Gerard says. "This record is like running around a field of flowers with a butcher knife. It's a guy standing on top of a hotel completely naked, screaming at the world. It's that crazy, that expressive."

"We always wanted to say something to everyone," concludes Mikey. "Now it's our time. We want people to be fearless, to be proud of themselves, to take a stand."

This message may be harder to communicate than the band anticipates: The debut of *The Black Parade* at this summer's Reading Festival in England was marred by some antagonistic fans chucking bottles and batteries at the stage. Indeed, there is a long history of rock groups proclaiming themselves ready to take over the world and the world responding with a yawn (or a well-thrown bottle). My Chemical Romance's new mantra of fearlessness can mean different things to different people—something especially true for Gerard, who still cops to sleeping with a night-light.

But for one evening in Italy at least, fearlessness means embracing normalcy. Looking out over Milan, Gerard fires up another cigarette and shouts: "Fuck yeah, I'm going to get some comfortable pants! Why stop there? Maybe a nice cable-knit sweater. Maybe I'll buy a house for my thirtieth birthday next year. I'm gonna get a Dodge Stratus. I'm gonna go to Blockbuster. I'm gonna get whatever shower curtain I want. Because *I deserve it*." And then the cackling starts again, the deep, raspy laughter of a not-at-all normal man who has suddenly found himself with little to fear and much to look forward to. [BLENDER]

**"I KNOW THE MINUTE I TOUCH
A DRINK AGAIN IS THE MINUTE
I LOSE EVERYTHING I'VE GOT."**
GERARD WAY

Angeles didn't help matters. "Take a manic-depressive kid and throw him in a haunted house—with no cell-phone service, no TV, no heat—and put him in a room with one glowing blue light." Mikey's hands actually begin to shake at the memory of it. "I got there immediately and was like, 'I know I'm not going to make it through this, I just wonder how it's going to end.'"

Mikey found himself desperate to escape, zoning out of practices and bursting into tears in front of the group. After an intervention from Stacy Fass—My Chemical Romance's attorney and unofficial band mom—Mikey left the house to seek treatment. Living with Fass, he saw a parade of psychologists—four times a week—and was relieved to find that his condition had a name, and that there was medication that could alleviate his depression. (Mikey describes his diagnosis as "very close to bipolar"; in the middle of dinner he swallows a rainbow-colored cocktail of pills that he says work "for now.")

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ROCK STAR WARS

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By Jon Dolan and Douglas Wolk

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ROCK STAR WARS

WORDS

(Second-Round Results)

1 BOB DYLAN (1966)

8 JAY-Z (2001)

THE MATCH: Blonde on Blueprint! Both Hova and Dylan are drawing show-offs and vicious aspersions, capable of knocking out verse after magisterially convoluted verse without breaking a sweat. If Nas felt compelled to lash back after "Takeover," whomever "Leopard-Skin Pill-Box Hat" is about probably never left the house again. That's Bob's edge: As the king of hip-hop in '01, S-Dot had to fight off challengers; in '66, everyone else simply bowed down to Dylan and hoped he wouldn't crush them like a bug (or like Donovan).

AND THE WINNER IS:
BOB DYLAN

2 U2 (1983)

10 THE SMITHS (1986)

THE MATCH: Smart, angry, powerful, blessed with a brilliantly original guitar player and an unmistakable vocalist certain that the world revolves around him—that could be either band. The Smiths take it, though, because they're funnier and sexier: While Bono's earnestly going on about the horrors of nuclear proliferation, Morrissey's imagining a romantic death by double-decker bus and invoking the bomb to inveigle somebody into the sack.

AND THE WINNER IS:
THE SMITHS

3 BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN AND THE E STREET BAND (1975)

11 PUBLIC ENEMY (1990)

THE MATCH: Both relentless, stage-crowding legions are trying for the crown, and the Boss has the live edge. But if *Born to Run* is, as Greil Marcus put it, "a '57 Chevy running on melted-down Crystals records," then *Fear of a Black Planet* is a beat-up Oldsmobile '98 with a pavement-liquefying bass bin, running on the melted-down entirety of the history of recorded music. So the contest comes down to sidemen, and Flavor Flav never stops running the clock on Clarence Clemons.

AND THE WINNER IS:
PUBLIC ENEMY

4 NOTORIOUS B.I.G. (1994)

12 ELVIS COSTELLO (1978)

THE MATCH: A pair of charismatic assholes with unhealthy attitudes about women—who got famous for their wordplay. But check the rhymes: there's "Though you try to stop it/She's like a narcotic," and then there's "In mansion and Benzes/Givin' ends to my friends and it feels stupendous." The Attractions get points for their blazing stage presence, but *This Year's Model* isn't as dramatic a statement of intent as *Ready to Die*.

AND THE WINNER IS:
NOTORIOUS B.I.G.

SWEET 16 PREVIEW

MATCH TO WATCH

1 BOB DYLAN (1966)

4 NOTORIOUS B.I.G. (1994)

It's the Thin Man vs. the fat man—can Bob's jewels, binoculars and Texas medicine best Biggie's packed Gats?



I see you got your black-and-white houndstooth scarf.

RIFFS

(Second-Round Results)

1 THE ROLLING STONES (1969)

8 THE WHO (1970)

THE MATCH: Sometimes the Dark Side wins, and Mick and Keef '69 get the edge by tapping into the evil psychic residue that bubbled up at the end of the '60s. *Let It Bleed* is a brutal summation of what happened to the hippie dream, prefiguring the murder at the Stones' Altamont gig, documented in *Gimme Shelter*. It's a close match, though: The Who's *Live at Leeds* is a scorched-earth blowout of a performance, but their scattershot 1970 communitarianism falters before their longtime rivals' concentrated malice.

AND THE WINNER IS:
THE ROLLING STONES

2 LED ZEPPELIN (1973)

10 GUNS N' ROSES (1988)

THE MATCH: Despite both bands' reps as hard-rock monsters, their enduring hits from these years were actually the sensitive ones—"Sweet Child O' Mine" and "Over the Hills and Far Away." The *Appetite for Destruction* tour revealed a band hungrier than the dazed emperors of *The Song Remains the Same*. But Steven Adler is no John Bonham, and as even Axl knows, Zeppelin built the stairway that GNR climbed, brick by brick.

AND THE WINNER IS:
LED ZEPPELIN

3 AC/DC (1980)

6 NEIL YOUNG AND CRAZY HORSE (1979)

THE MATCH: Within months after Bon Scott's death, AC/DC regrouped and released *Back in Black*, a leering megalith. Neil Young '79, meanwhile, produced the visionary *Rust Never Sleeps* and *Live Rust*, and they rock out plenty; he could also pull off slow and quiet, which AC/DC had barely even heard of. Ultimately, Young's moments of sensitive introspection will next to the Australians' juggernaut of id and amps, and AC/DC's wall-shaking, earth-quaking rhythm section makes Crazy Horse sound tame.

AND THE WINNER IS:
AC/DC

4 PRINCE AND THE REVOLUTION (1984)

12 METALLICA (1986)

THE MATCH: Metallica '86 were the greatest metal band of their age, at the peak of their shredding power. Shredding? Yeah, Prince '84 could do that. He could also do ballads, funk and bump-'n'-grind so potent that Tipper Gore founded the PMRC, all while singing circles around James Hetfield. And while Cliff Burton-era Metallica were probably a tighter ensemble than the Revolution, Prince could've been backed by the Bad News Bears and still won.

AND THE WINNER IS:
PRINCE AND THE REVOLUTION

SWEET 16 PREVIEW

MATCH TO WATCH

2 LED ZEPPELIN (1973)

3 AC/DC (1980)

The Godzilla and Mothra of classic rock face off in a deafening duel of testosterone, wailing solos and larynx abuse.



Angus decides to try the schoolboy outfit for this show.

BOB DYLAN (1966)

TUPAC (1993)

JAY-Z (2001)

JONI MITCHELL (1972)

NOTORIOUS B.I.G. (1994)

THE REPLACEMENTS (1984)

EMINEM (2000)

ELVIS COSTELLO AND THE ATTRACTIONS (1978)

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN AND THE E STREET BAND (1975)

WU-TANG CLAN (1993)

THE SEX PISTOLS (1977)

PUBLIC ENEMY (1990)

BOB MARLEY AND THE WAILERS (1973)

THE SMITHS (1986)

U2 (1983)

PAVEMENT (1992)

(FIRST ROUND)

THE ROLLING STONES (1969)

SLEATER-KINNEY (1997)

THE WHO (1970)

THE CLASH (1980)

PRINCE AND THE REVOLUTION (1984)

R.E.M. (1983)

BLACK SABBATH (1970)

METALLICA (1986)

AC/DC (1980)

RUN-D.M.C. (1986)

NEIL YOUNG AND CRAZY HORSE (1979)

LYNYRD SKYNYRD (1974)

JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE (1967)

GUNS N' ROSES (1988)

LED ZEPPELIN (1973)

THE WHITE STRIPES (2003)

BOB DYLAN (1966)

JAY-Z (2001)

NOTORIOUS B.I.G. (1994)

ELVIS COSTELLO AND THE ATTRACTIONS (1978)

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN AND THE E STREET BAND (1975)

PUBLIC ENEMY (1990)

THE SMITHS (1986)

U2 (1983)

(SECOND ROUND)

THE ROLLING STONES (1969)

THE WHO (1970)

PRINCE AND THE REVOLUTION (1984)

METALLICA (1986)

AC/DC (1980)

NEIL YOUNG AND CRAZY HORSE (1979)

GUNS N' ROSES (1988)

LED ZEPPELIN (1973)

BOB DYLAN (1966)

NOTORIOUS B.I.G. (1994)

PUBLIC ENEMY (1990)

THE SMITHS (1986)

(SWEET 16)

THE WHO (1970)

PRINCE AND THE REVOLUTION (1984)

AC/DC (1980)

LED ZEPPELIN (1973)

(ELITE 8)

(FINAL 4)

1	(1970) JAMES BROWN	1	(1970) JAMES BROWN
16	(2000) RADIOHEAD	16	(2000) BRITNEY SPEARS
8	(1989) BEASTIE BOYS	8	(1989) BEASTIE BOYS
9	(2000) RADIOHEAD	9	(2000) RADIOHEAD
4	(2000) OUTKAST	4	(2000) OUTKAST
13	(2004) KANYE WEST	13	(2004) KANYE WEST
5	(1980) TALKING HEADS	5	(1980) TALKING HEADS
12	(1979) CHIC	12	(1979) CHIC
3	(1977) PARLIAMENT/FUNKADELIC	3	(1977) PARLIAMENT/FUNKADELIC
14	(1973) GRATEFUL DEAD	14	(1973) GRATEFUL DEAD
6	(1969) THE VELVET UNDERGROUND	6	(1969) THE VELVET UNDERGROUND
11	(1983) NEW ORDER	11	(1983) NEW ORDER
7	(1969) SLY & THE FAMILY STONE	7	(1969) SLY & THE FAMILY STONE
10	(1989) DE LA SOUL	10	(1989) DE LA SOUL
2	(1956) ELVIS PRESLEY	2	(1956) ELVIS PRESLEY
15	(2001) MISSY ELLIOTT	15	(2001) MISSY ELLIOTT

1	(1964) THE BEATLES	1	(1964) THE BEATLES
16	(1976) KISS	16	(1976) KISS
8	(1977) RAMONES	8	(1977) RAMONES
9	(1972) DAVID BOWIE	9	(1972) DAVID BOWIE
4	(1983) MICHAEL JACKSON	4	(1983) MICHAEL JACKSON
13	(1965) THE SUPREMES	13	(1965) THE SUPREMES
5	(1985) MADONNA	5	(1985) MADONNA
12	(1966) THE BEACH BOYS	12	(1966) THE BEACH BOYS
3	(1972) STEVIE WONDER	3	(1972) STEVIE WONDER
14	(1973) ROXY MUSIC	14	(1973) ROXY MUSIC
6	(1967) ARETHA FRANKLIN	6	(1967) ARETHA FRANKLIN
11	(1969) CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL	11	(1969) CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL
7	(1972) AL GREEN	7	(1972) AL GREEN
10	(1977) FLEETWOOD MAC	10	(1977) FLEETWOOD MAC
2	(1991) NIRVANA	2	(1991) NIRVANA
15	(2004) GREEN DAY	15	(2004) GREEN DAY

GROOVES (Second-Round Results)

1 JAMES BROWN (1970)
vs.
8 RADIOHEAD (2000)
THE MATCH-UP: Phil Selway's angular broken-beats are a distant descendant of Clyde Stubblefield's wickedly syncopated shuffle, and Thom Yorke can do a weirdly cool manic-depressive good foot. But the tightest band ever takes care of business in the flip of a cape. The JB set feels like one militarily precise mega-jam, songs transitioned brilliantly together, medleys of '60s soul scrimmaging with next-level funk. Both bands mesmerize, but the Godfather transcends.
AND THE WINNER IS:
JAMES BROWN

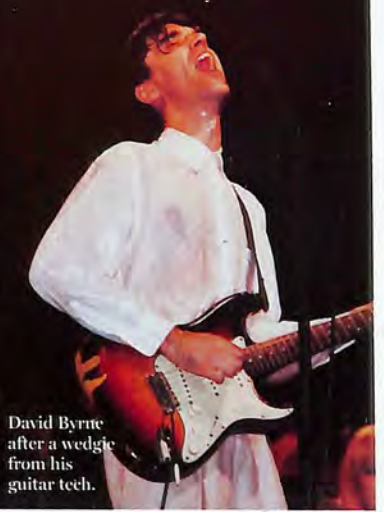
3 PARLIAMENT/FUNKADELIC (1977)
vs.
11 NEW ORDER (1983)
THE MATCH-UP: In '83, New Order was codifying a brand-new thing—a combination of punk angst and disco drive that bands are still mimicking today. But mid-'70s Parliament/Funkadelic had perfected something far more inventive—an intergalactic R&B that fused heavy funk (courtesy of bassist Bootsy Collins and keyboardist Bernie Worrell), a smooth disco flow and a horn-heavy Motown catchiness. George Clinton called it "the Temptations on acid," and it leaves the Mancunian moaners high and dry.
AND THE WINNER IS:
PARLIAMENT/FUNKADELIC

2 ELVIS PRESLEY (1956)
vs.
7 SLY & THE FAMILY STONE (1969)
THE MATCH-UP: Both offered unifying visions of black and white America. Elvis's pelvis brought "Negro" dance moves into suburban living rooms, while Sly and his racially integrated band imagined harmony between funk and pop. The Family Stone's euphoric energy and blinding outfits catch the King off-guard, but even a dance machine like Sly is humbled in the face of a man who, in his prime, could change history with a single hip shake.
AND THE WINNER IS:
ELVIS PRESLEY

13 KANYE WEST (2004)
vs.
5 TALKING HEADS (1980)
THE MATCH-UP: Kanye benefits from having some very famous friends to call on for cameos. But the college dropout gets dropped by the art-school assassins. By 1980, the Heads had moved beyond groovy new wave into a futuristic ethno-funk, with producer Brian Eno pushing them into some of the wildest beats ever attempted by nerdy white folk. And for a big goofy guy in an oversized suit, David Byrne has some moves, too.
AND THE WINNER IS:
TALKING HEADS

SWEET 16 PREVIEW

MATCH TO WATCH
1 JAMES BROWN (1970)
vs.
5 TALKING HEADS (1980)
Finally, the Hardest Working Man in Show Business takes on a band that can stretch out their funk as long as he can and pile on some sounds he's never heard.



David Byrne after a wedgie from his guitar tech.

TUNES (Second-Round Results)

1 THE BEATLES (1964)
vs.
8 RAMONES (1977)
THE MATCH-UP: Paul McCartney used to check into hotels as "Paul Ramon." The Ramones liked the name so much they ripped it off—along with a melody or two. It isn't a rule that a fan can't upset a hero, but the '64 Beatles weren't just cute guys with fun love songs. In their early years, they played tougher bars than CBGB and they looked cool in leather, too. Both bands cram as much pop pep into their songs as possible, but the Beatles are rock gods, movie stars, cultural ambassadors, a great interview and an awesome head of hair.
AND THE WINNER IS:
THE BEATLES

3 STEVIE WONDER (1972)
vs.
6 ARETHA FRANKLIN (1967)
THE MATCH-UP: Only Prince can claim a period of doing-it-all brilliance like early-'70s Stevie. He becomes soul music's great auteur on *Talking Book* and fires off a legendary heat rock on "Superstition." But Aretha in '67 is the greatest soul singer ever; inventing a whole new emotional language of pain and desire on her album *I Never Loved a Man the Way I Love You*. If you factor in the crack Muscle Shoals band assembled by producer Jerry Wexler, it's a natural force even a genius like Stevie has to bow to.
AND THE WINNER IS:
ARETHA FRANKLIN

2 NIRVANA (1991)
vs.
10 FLEETWOOD MAC (1977)
THE MATCH-UP: A couple of blond, bummed beauties (Kurt Cobain and Stevie Nicks) square off. Kurt Cobain has as many catchy melodies as Mac tunesmith Lindsey Buckingham, plus he smashes stuff and his rhythm section is way heavier. Fleetwood Mac keep running offstage for artificial enhancement, while Nirvana are fueled by hate and misery alone, and their angst adds an edge the decadent Californians don't have.
AND THE WINNER IS:
NIRVANA

4 MICHAEL JACKSON (1983)
vs.
5 MADONNA (1985)
THE MATCH-UP: M.J. moonwalks across the stage; Madonna writhes on it. He's got "Billie Jean" and "Beat It." She's got "Dress You Up" and "Material Girl." The fate of '80s pop hangs in the balance. But Michael's show wavers when he lets Tito and Jermaine onstage for a Jackson 5 medley. Madonna relinquishes power to no one. Her encore of "Like a Virgin," sung in a white wedding dress while lying on her back, locks up an amazing upset.
AND THE WINNER IS:
MADONNA

SWEET 16 PREVIEW

MATCH TO WATCH
1 THE BEATLES (1964)
vs.
5 MADONNA (1985)
Who knows if we'll be able to hear this one over the keening wall of screaming teenage girls, but cross-generational cuteness will be insane either way.



Aretha Franklin: Queen of Soul, vertigo sufferer.

(CHAMPIONSHIP)

"I AM A GOLDEN GOD!"

(FINAL 4)

(ELITE 8)

(SWEET 16)

(SECOND ROUND)

(FIRST ROUND)

NEXT MONTH:
SWEET 16 RESULTS,
ELITE 8 PREVIEW

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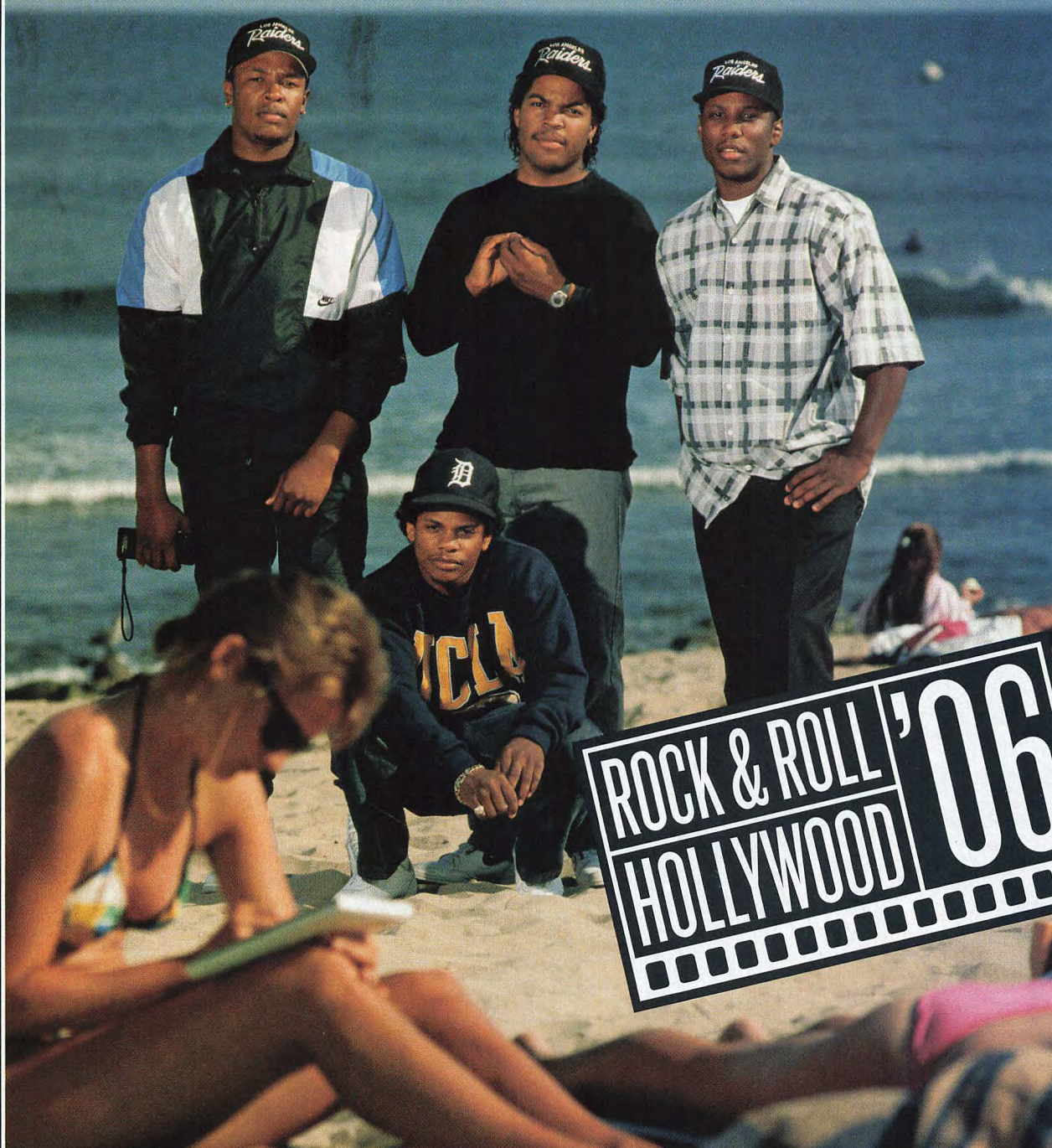


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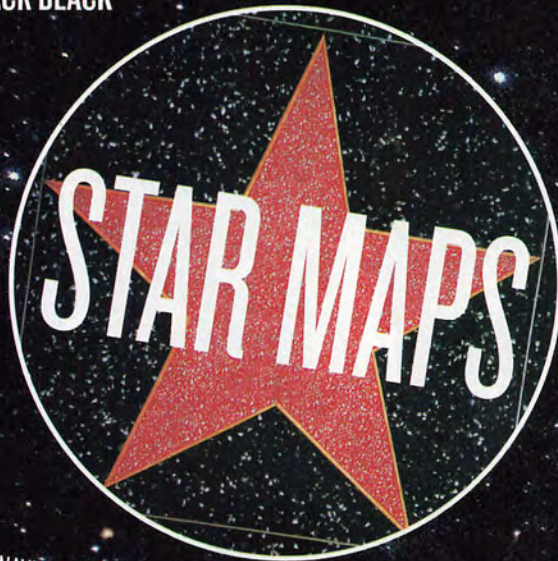


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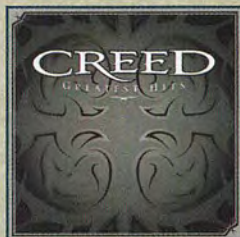
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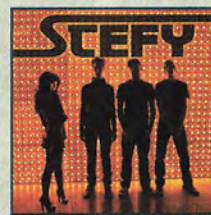


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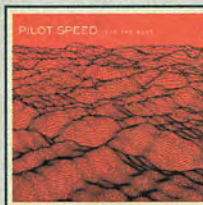


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CHRIS NORRIS, JODY ROSEN, RJ SMITH, ROB
TANNENBAUM, BARRY WALTERS AND JONAH WEINER

FROM DRUGGIE DAYS IN THE MANSIONS OF LAUREL CANYON TO BOOZY NIGHTS ON THE SUNSET STRIP, WE

THE

25

GREATEST
SONGS ABOUT

L.A.

COUNT DOWN THE BEST THE CITY OF ANGELS HAS TO OFFER

109

25

GREATEST SONGS ABOUT L.A.

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS

UNDER THE BRIDGE (1991)

DON'T DO DRUGS, WARN THE KINGS OF CALIFORNICATION

It wasn't the first time Anthony Kiedis had gotten clean—and it certainly wouldn't be the last. But the temporarily sober Chili Peppers singer, inspired by the downtown drug lair where he used to shoot up, penned this lyrical, elegiac love letter to L.A.'s seedy underbelly. "I sensed there was a nonhuman entity, maybe the spirit of the hills and the city ... who was looking after me," he later wrote. *Duuude*.

MOST L.A. THING ABOUT THEM: Bassist Flea played Nihilist No. 2 in that hilarious paean to Angeleno slackerdom, *The Big Lebowski*, and was in another ur-L.A. flick, *Less Than Zero*.



Red Hot Chili Peppers: They'd give you the shirts off their backs.

24

X

LOS ANGELES (1980)

LIKE THE DOORS ON CRANK

With Charles Bukowski-inspired lyrics of decay and addiction, they're the band that taught snotty West Coast punks how to grow up. Here, X tear the skin off the dark side of L.A., the night city packed with John Birchers, English Only zealots, neo-Nazis and un-jolly skinheads. Fueled by wicked rockabilly guitar licks, it's a little fable about a girl who had to get out of town because the melting pot was boiling over.

MOST L.A. THING ABOUT THEM: Bassist-singer John Doe's solid career as a character actor, including appearances in *Road House*, *Boogie Nights* and *The Rage: Carrie 2*

23

PHANTOM PLANET

CALIFORNIA (2002)

ODE TO LA-LA LAND IN *O.C. MAJOR*

From the tinkling piano intro to Alexander Greenwald's misty-eyed shout-outs to the 101, it conjures all the optimism and exhaustion of a Cali-bound road trip—the gas prices gouged you, the motel showers skeeved you, but it was all worth it for those sunsets. It's the stuff of American myth: For three minutes Hollywood is the promised land—and getting there is a pilgrimage. No wonder the song sounds so huge scoring *The O.C.* opening credits.

MOST L.A. THING ABOUT THEM: Greenwald acts (*Donnie Darko*, *Bad News Bears*), as does the group's original drummer, Jason Schwartzman.

22

SOUL COUGHING

SCREENWRITER'S BLUES (1994)

BRIGHT NEW YORK BOYS LOST IN THE SHALLOW CITY

There's an old Hollywood joke about an actress who was so dumb she slept with the screenwriter (they're the guys at the bottom of the food chain). This lament pounds like squeaky bedsprings; frontman M. Doughty's lyrics are the gripes of a smart guy stuck in an apocalypse he can't escape, surrounded by nobodies who act like they're on *Entourage*. You can practically hear his teeth itching on this rickety boho rant about B-girls and boring suburbs and a car crash in slow motion—and, most of all, about how in L.A. even the nobodies are sleeping with models.

MOST L.A. THING ABOUT THEM: Bassist Sebastian Steinberg once backed William Shatner.

21

THE CLASH

THE RIGHT PROFILE (1979)

HE DRANK. HE DROVE

Years before James Dean, Montgomery Clift was the original new-breed leading man: handsome, withdrawn, inarticulate, tortured. His legend was sealed in 1957 when he crashed his car leaving a party at Liz Taylor's. His face wrecked, Clift kept making movies but had to be shot from "the right profile." He's a natural poster boy for what happens to the sensitive in Hollywood. The Clash paint him as the author of his own demise (myriad addictions sped him toward a heart attack), while R.E.M.'s 1992 "Monty Got a Raw Deal" renders him a victim—too beautiful to live.

MOST L.A. THING ABOUT THEM: The Clash named a live album after one of Clift's most famous films, *From Here to Eternity*.



Joe Strummer: "Does this hair make me look like a homicidal, taxi-driving vigilante?"
Mick Jones: "Yep."

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20

THE MIRACLES

AIN'T NOBODY STRAIGHT IN L.A. (1975)

MOTOWN CELEBRATES HOMOTOWN

After Smokey Robinson left the Miracles in 1972, the group bounced back with *City of Angels*, a hit L.A. concept album featuring this jaw-dropping vestige from Motown's experimental era. Over a breezy Latin-pop arrangement rife with fey flutes and falsetto *la la las*, Robinson replacement Billy Griffin coos, "Homosexuality is a part of society." Better yet is the group's spoken decision over a long instrumental vamp to check out a gay bar on Hollywood Boulevard because "gay people are nice people, too, man!" Right on.

MOST L.A. THING ABOUT THEM: This song. Unlike their '60s labelmates, the Miracles refused to move when Motown president Berry Gordy Jr. relocated his label from Detroit to L.A. in the early '70s.

19

RUFUS WAINWRIGHT

CALIFORNIA (2001)

CANADIAN OPERA LOVER GROWS BORED AT "BIG-TIME ROLLERS, PART-TIME MODELS"

With its strummed acoustic guitars and campfire-friendly melody, this single from Wainwright's second album resembles a Mamas & the Papas oldie jagged with jaded bon mots. Written during a residency at Manhattan's famed rock domicile the Hotel Chelsea, Wainwright sired Cole Porter-esque lines like "So much to plunder that I think I'll sleep instead"—apparently inspired by a disappointingly sedate Marilyn Manson party this avowed hedonist attended.

MOST L.A. THING ABOUT HIM: Wainwright recorded his 1998 debut album in Los Angeles while living one flight below fellow Canadian expat Leonard Cohen.

18

PUBLIC ENEMY

BURN HOLLYWOOD BURN (1990)

THEY CAME TO BURY AUNT JEMIMA

Three years after director Robert Townsend's film *Hollywood Shuffle* mocked the industry's use of shuffling, smiling black stereotypes, this incendiary rap hit, with bicoastal cameos from N.Y. king Big Daddy Kane and L.A. prince Ice Cube, gave a beat-down to Tinseltown "for all the years we looked like clowns" in demeaning roles as butlers, maids, pimps and hos. The lyrics bring Siskel & Ebert movie reviewing to the hood. Film they especially hate: *Driving Miss Daisy*. Film they especially love: *Black Caesar*.

MOST L.A. THING ABOUT THEM: They share their name with a 1931 James Cagney gangster movie, *The Public Enemy*.

17

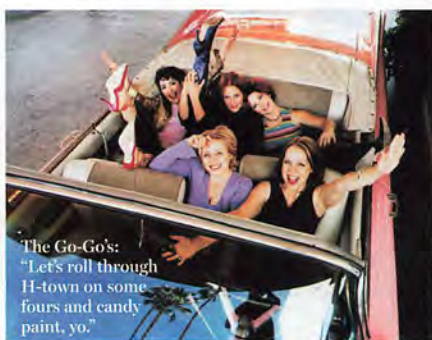
THE GO-GO'S

THIS TOWN (1981)

MTV PIXIES GLIMPSE DARKNESS IN THEIR HOMETOWN

"We're all dreamers, we're all whores/ Discarded stars, like worn out cars." No, it's not a rouge-smearing Courtney Love, but the fresh-faced Gidgets of new wave, casting a cynical glance at rock clubs and modeling agencies—smiling for cameras as they drug-binged offstage. It's a warning to stay clear, but it ends in a taunt: "Bet you'd live here if you could/And be one of us."

MOST L.A. THING ABOUT THEM: Pioneered home-video scandals with a wasted party tape, shot in a Holiday Inn bathroom. In the now-infamous video, members of the band urge a male roadie to masturbate. He tries, but fails.



The Go-Go's: "Let's roll through H-town on some fours and candy paint, yo."



Perry Farrell as Hippie Robocop.



16

JANE'S ADDICTION

JANE SAYS (1988)

PERRY FARRELL REMINISCES ABOUT THE JUNKIE HOUSEMATE WHO INSPIRED THIS SUNNY ODE TO WAKING UP ON A STREET CORNER

Around 1984, I rented a big house on Wilton, near Hancock Park, right in the heart of everything good in Hollywood, but the whole neighborhood seemed deteriorated. I deceived the landlord into thinking I was a gay interior decorator rather than a punk rocker, and one of my housemates was Jane, this strangely beautiful, well-to-do girl who got caught up in the drug scene and fell in love with a dealer named Sergio. Jane was an intellectual and knew how to act aristocratic, even with a needle and a spoon on the table. I'm not sure if the song mythologized the neighborhood—St. Andrew's Place is nothing special to look at—but I do think it glamorized her life in a way. That was a great time, though. When the landlord found out I wasn't a gay interior decorator, he came after me with a gun."





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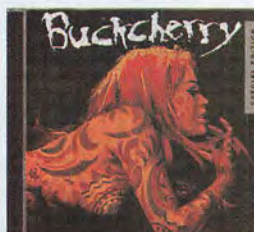
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15

ART BRUT

MOVING TO L.A. (2005)

CALIFORNIA DREAMING GETS A CALIFORNIA REAMING

These London punks are experts at celebrating the same things they take the piss out of, and that's the double-edged treatment they give L.A. on this joyful, strum-happy daydream about escaping England to hang around with Axl Rose and cruise the Sunset Strip shirtless on a Harley-Davidson. Is snarky Eddie Argos making fun of the city's buff exhibitionism and the has-been celebs who litter its pavement—or is he a pasty tosser who'd like to move somewhere he can get a tan? The answer's yes.

MOST L.A. THING ABOUT THEM: It's not Argos's pallid skin or *oi mate* accent, so it must be his ironic mustache.

14

BOB SEGER AND THE SILVER BULLET BAND

HOLLYWOOD NIGHTS (1978)

DETROIT HOMEBOY "TOO FAR FROM HOME"

Bob Seger says he wrote this classic-rock eternal one night while staying in a rented place in the Hollywood Hills and staring down at a magazine with original supermodel Cheryl Tiegs on the cover. It's a fable about a pure Midwestern boy falling headfirst for the wrong girl, and with two drummers pounding along it speeds like a Ford Mustang headed for the San Andreas Fault. The girl, "bright as the sun," leaves him, of course—what Midwestern newbie can hold a golden goddess? But there's no regret in Seger's voice.

MOST L.A. THING ABOUT THEM: Tom Cruise danced in his briefs to a Seger song in 1983's *Risky Business*.

13

JONI MITCHELL

FREE MAN IN PARIS (1974)

L.A. SINGER FEELS MUSIC MOGUL'S PAIN

While living in the rock enclave Laurel Canyon, Joni Mitchell wrote this lament for music-biz workers inspired by, of all people, megagazillionaire record executive David Geffen. Mitchell's longtime friend had spoken of disenchantment with "stoking the star-maker machinery behind the popular song," and Mitchell cast Paris as Geffen's paradise lost—a place "where there was nobody calling me up for favors/And no one's future to decide." In '70s L.A., this passed for a tragic figure.

MOST L.A. THING ABOUT HER: From "Big Yellow Taxi," one of her biggest hits: "They paved paradise, and put up a parking lot/With a pink hotel, a boutique and a swinging hot spot." Remind you of anywhere?



The unattached head of Sheryl Crow enjoys a Sunday drive.

SHERYL CROW

ALL I WANNA DO (1993)

SHERYL CROW RECALLS THE UNLIKELY ORIGIN OF HER CAREER-MAKING SONG ABOUT EARLY-MORNING BEER BUZZES

We were jamming in the studio, and I picked up this poem in a book—the first line was 'All I wanna do is have some fun.' It encapsulated what was going on in L.A., a real extreme feeling of apathy and defeat. It's masked in this light pop ditty, but it's about somebody down and out, sitting in a bar watching their life go by. I contacted the poet, Wyn Cooper, and he was really pleased. And the song was easy for me to sell because it was a character I could easily slip into. There was a lot of drinking going on in my life then, a lot of late-night bars. The song was a throwaway—it wasn't even going to be on the album. My little brother kept saying, 'This is a big hit.' And there really is a bar on Formosa across from a car wash. But I haven't ever spent a morning in a bar having a beer, I have to say."



David Bowie: "I knew Iman wasn't eating enough."

11

DAVID BOWIE CRACKED ACTOR (1973)

BRITISH VISITOR FALLS FOR L.A. STREET LIFE

While it's rumored his 46-person entourage incurred a \$100,000 bill at the Beverly Hills Hotel one night during Bowie's 1972 tour, the singer played tourist on Hollywood Boulevard, then returned to his room to create this fabulously sordid confrontation between a faded film star and a smack-addled street hustler. As Bowie spits a cheery chorus of "Suck, baby suck, give me your head/Before you start professing that you're knocking me dead," guitarist Mick Ronson supplies sonic rough trade via a torrent of proto-punk distortion.

MOST L.A. THING ABOUT HIM: Bowie's film career has been pretty silly, but in 1997 he was given his own star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

WHO WILL YOU HOOK UP WITH IF YOU'RE HUNG OVER?



AXE RECOVERY SHOWER GEL
WASH AWAY YOUR HANGOVER.

10

FLEETWOOD MAC

GOLD DUST WOMAN (1977)

BEAUTIFUL NIGHTMARE OF LOVE GONE DARK AND DRUGGY

When writing a song about cocaine, it's a good idea to use metaphors so the DEA doesn't come sniffing around. But instantly, Stevie Nicks's unveiled ballad "Gold Dust Woman" declares its theme: "Take your silver spoon/And dig your grave." Nicks was waste-deep in piles of Hollywood caffeine—years later, she admitted to boring a hole in her septum big enough "to pass a belt through"—and sounds like she's singing from a candlelit powder room: Sinister harmonies lead to paranoid mutterings within a sonic sheen that's pure Hollywood Hills voodoo.

MOST L.A. THING ABOUT THEM: Inquiring after the most L.A. thing about Nicks is like asking, "What's the most Egyptian thing about Cleopatra?"



John McVie: "Can you guys keep the orgy down? I'm trying to read."

ANNIE LEIBOVITZ

9

MÖTLEY CRÜE

GIRLS, GIRLS, GIRLS (1987)

SPANDEX GODS SALUTE THEIR SISTERS

The title answers the question, "What three things do Mötley Crüe care about most?" The song's salivating repetition signifies a desire for excess and simplicity, and the mascara-wearing kings of Sunset Strip hair metal pay awestruck tribute to the mascara-wearing queens of Sunset Strip stripping. Above a wall of skeezy guitars, "Girls" conjures images of a purer, simpler time, before So-Cal's aspiring porn starlets discovered implants and the Brazilian bikini wax.

MOST L.A. THING ABOUT THEM: The ex-wives: Heather Locklear, Donna D'Errico, Pamela Anderson

8

ALBERT HAMMOND

IT NEVER RAINS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA (1973)

SOFT-ROCK BALLAD BEGINS HOPEFULLY, ENDS WOEFULLY

Act 1: Handsome, small-town yokel moves to Hollywood in search of "TV breaks and movies." Fake strings and a flute solo greet him at the airport, help him with his luggage. Act 2: Yokel finds 30,000 handsomer yokels at casting calls, runs out of cash, moans, "I wanna go hooome," like it's the first day of summer camp. Act 3: Yokel bumps into a friend from home, feels hideous shame. Flute solo returns to taunt him with classy insouciance.

MOST L.A. THING ABOUT HIM: Hammond wrote songs performed by super-L.A. folks like Mama Cass and Richard Carpenter.

7

WAR

LOW RIDER (1975)

THE ULTIMATE CRUISING SONG, FOR THE ULTIMATE CRUISING CITY

The title is an expression for a customized car, a person and a whole way of life: coolness on wheels long before Dre got his driver's license. Barry White and Korn (with bagpipes!) have covered the song, but nobody has ever mastered the sunbaked funk like the originators, a multiracial crew who represented Chicano culture at Top 40 radio and "spread a message of brotherhood and harmony," according to singer-keyboardist Lonnie Jordan.

MOST L.A. THING ABOUT THEM: They got their start in a small nightclub, backing former L.A. Rams football star turned singer-actor Deacon Jones.

ANNIE LEIBOVITZ/CONTACT PRESS IMAGES

Dear Ketel One Drinker
The perfect holiday cocktail:
Ketel One and ice.
(Ice optional.)



Is Courtney a natural blonde? Only this headless woman knows for sure.

6 2PAC CALIFORNIA LOVE (1996)

STRAIGHT OUTTA PRISON, PAC TEAMS WITH DR. DRE FOR A WEST COAST MASTERPIECE

Newly released from an 11-month bid for sexual assault, Tupac Shakur joined Dr. Dre on this quintessential California rap celebration. Death Row Records CEO Suge Knight posted Shakur's \$1.4 million bail, and, in exchange, the increasingly erratic superstar agreed to sign a contract with Death Row. Dre snarls about his veteran stature over tense keyboards, while Pac breaks down his L.A. lifestyle in 16 vicious bars. The indelible talk-box-assisted hook ("In the cit-aaaay, city of Compton ...") defined a moment when all relevant hip-hop seemed to be oozing from Cali.

MOST L.A. THING ABOUT HIM: 2Pac acted in at least a few films before he was killed, including *Juice* and *Poetic Justice*.



2Pac: Predictable at Rock, Paper, Scissors.



The Eagles: Worst. Vision Quest. Ever.

5 HOLE MALIBU (1998)

COURTNEY LOVE ON BOYS, DRUGS AND THE REDEPTIVE POWERS OF STING'S BEACHFRONT PROPERTY

I actually wrote 'Malibu' for Stevie Nicks to sing; I wanted to write her a hit. The song's about living in a trailer in Malibu with my first boyfriend, Jeff. I was 16. And it's kind of about Kurt, too. It's an empathy song: Come to me, I'll save you. I wanted the boy in the song to drive away from Hollywood and the drugs. When I was pregnant, Kurt and I always had this thing about getting out of the basement apartment we lived in with dealers next door and going to live in Malibu. It's a very healing place. I was there yesterday, visiting Sting and Trudie, and I went for a walk on the beach. That always makes me feel good."



4 TOM PETTY FREE FALLIN' (1989)

ESCAPE, CATASTROPHE AND VAMPIRISM MIXED INTO A BREAKUP SONG

What's it like to dump a Valley Girl? According to Tom Petty, it's like leaping out of an airplane without a parachute. The lyric to this smash ballad is a dark, impressionistic tour of greater L.A., from suburban Reseda to the "vampires" in the Valley. The shimmering, languid sound—acoustic guitars chiming against harmony vocals—is High Cali, instantly recognizable as the work of producer Jeff Lynne, the British El Lay rock royal behind dozens of ferociously laid-back records. The video featured another L.A. icon, legendary skater dude Mark "Gator" Rogowski, currently serving time for rape and murder.

MOST L.A. THING ABOUT HIM: Got Kim Basinger to play dead in the video for "Mary Jane's Last Dance."

3 THE EAGLES NEW KID IN TOWN (1976)

THE PILLOW MINT AT THE HOTEL CALIFORNIA

"We never glorified California," Don Henley says. "We were running it down from the beginning." But so immersed in L.A. they smelled like ocean, tinsel and smog, the Eagles sure mythologized the town, and nowhere more than on the bicentennial blockbuster *Hotel California*. The title song has grand, forced metaphors, and "Life in the Fast Lane" crashes a drug party into a stop sign, but "New Kid in Town" recasts *Sunset Boulevard* with a male lead: a nobody becomes a star, then gets pushed aside for a younger nobody. "I don't want to hear it," Glenn Frey croons to a refrain that won't stop.

MOST L.A. THING ABOUT THEM: Banging every hostess-actress in town, 1972–1979.

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2

N.W.A

STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPTON

(1989)

REFLECTIVE MOTHERFUCKER NAMED **ICE CUBE** LOOKS BACK ON THE SONG THAT TURNED AN L.A. NEIGHBORHOOD INTO AN INTERNATIONAL SYMBOL FOR URBAN BLIGHT

When drugs and gangbanging combined in the '80s, that was a toxic-ass mix of shit. So we had to start speaking on it. We were at Dre and DJ Yella's apartment in Norwalk, a little east of Compton—had equipment set up in the living room, there wasn't any furniture. At the time, L.A. was producing all kinds of hip-hop, but we were the first to do a record that aggressive—it was the sound of a rampaging gang. Older people in Compton thought we were giving the city a worse rap than it already had, which was hard to do. But young people loved that they now had a voice. When you say L.A., most people think about the beach, the Lakers, the sun and the fun. For sure, this was an education."



N.W.A.'s weekly nature walks provided opportunities for exercise, quiet reflection and...
Gat dumping.

GUNS N' ROSES

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

(1987)

SMALL-TOWN KID HITS STREETS OF L.A., SMELLS TEEN SPIRIT, VOMIT, BLOOD

Just when Mötley Crüe were toasting the joys of Sunset titty bars, this hurricane of a song swept in from the darker side of the Strip: a sneering gutter-howl from ill-nocturnal Hollywood, a place where "if you got the money, honey, we got your disease." Axl Rose knew whereof he screeched. Living broke in a Sunset crash pad dubbed

"Hell House," the band spent years on the lower rungs of the local economy—they scammed girlfriends, some sold drugs—blending outsider perspective (Indiana-born Rose *was* the hayseed transplant he played in the "Jungle" video) with seamy images they collected as genuine L.A. lowlifes. The song's intensity implies that their jungle was a glimpse into an apocalyptic future.

MOST L.A. THING ABOUT THEM: Like a true mogul, Rose has burned through \$13 million on a project that, at press time, was still unreleased: the chimerical sixth GN'R album, *Chinese Democracy*.



Guns N' Roses celebrate their third day of rehab.





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PARKING





Pamela Anderson



How many health-code violations can you spot in this photograph?

FROM VENICE BEACH PINUP AND HOLLYWOOD ACTION STAR TO ONLINE POKER CEO, MRS. KID ROCK HAS DONE IT ALL — AND STILL KNOWS THE BEST PLACE TO BUY A HOT BIKINI ...



MELISSA ODABASH SHOWROOM

MALIBU

"I like this swimwear designer, Melissa Odabash. She has a showroom in Malibu—you can get a great bikini. Hot, super hot, sexy. I raid that place every once in a while. You've got to have a lot of good bikinis if you live in L.A."

TAVERNA TONY

23410 CIVIC CENTER WAY, MALIBU

"Another place I like in Malibu is this great Greek restaurant. We had just gotten back from Greece and my kids were like, 'Tony's food is better, Mom.' So that's a very good compliment. It's really casual, and Tony is just great. I'm his wildflower; he loves me. I'm his favorite customer. He probably says that to everybody, though."

THE DUME ROOM

29169 HEATHERCLIFF ROAD, MALIBU

"The Dume Room is kind of seedy, but that's why I like it. It has live music. My dad got kicked out of the Dume Room, and I don't understand how he did that. I think they had the Stanley Cup in there and my dad tried to bring it back to Canada, where it belongs. He would have been a hero."

MALIBU

"Malibu is like *The Simple Life* on crack. No one really has a job; everyone's doing something to save something. They all have mansions, but they're driving Priuses and trying to save the environment."

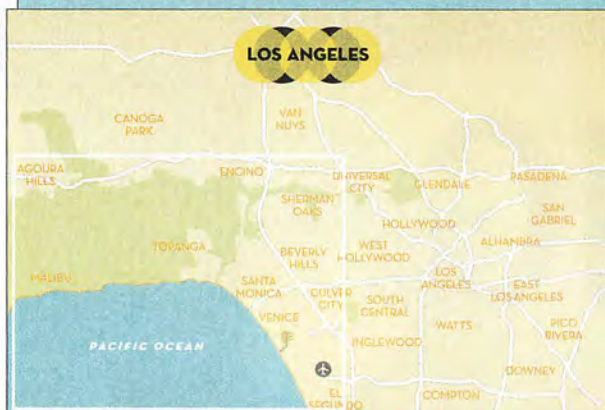


ILLUSTRATION BY HAISAM HUSSEIN

VAN NUYS

8221 SUNSET BOULEVARD,
HOLLYWOOD

"They shot *Myra Breckinridge* there, so it's one of my favorite places. The penthouse is beautiful. Plenty of fun times. Bryan Adams and I recorded a song there, 'When You're Gone.' I went to his room and we recorded it in an hour."

LOS ANGELES

"When I go to Hollywood, I start at the Chateau Marmont and then I usually end up naked in David LaChapelle's studio taking crazy pictures. That's usually a night with me. Four or five in the morning, lying across a car in David's studio."

CALABASAS

"We sold lemonade on the beach to raise money for the California Wildlife Center. My kids actually made, like \$35 grand in an hour! I think they ended up funding the new wing of the medical center. When they delivered the jar, they almost fell over backwards. People in Malibu can be very generous."

10236 CHARING CROSS ROAD,
BEVERLY HILLS

"This is where I started. There was always lots of craziness going on there. I remember seeing Hef with all seven of his girlfriends covered in baby oil. That was a sight. The only thing they were wearing was baby oil. I was kind of transfixed."

1819 OCEAN AVENUE, SANTA MONICA

"They started calling that hotel room my second home. A lot of crazy stuff has happened there. I used to go there and make forts with my friends! Lots of arts and crafts, lots of balloons, tape, scissors, ribbons. But we clean up our mess before we leave. Part of the whole therapy of it is cleaning up afterward. And telling traumatic childhood stories in the bathtub with your friends. That's the kind of stuff we do. Every good party ends up in the bathtub."

9355 BLURTON WAY BEVERLY HILLS

"Kid Rock and I got married in St. Tropez and we had to go here to sign our papers and make it legal. We didn't realize we had to do a whole other ceremony in front of the judge and exchange rings. There were plastic flowers and a plastic cake and plastic chairs. And I was like, 'We should get the kids out of the car for this, don't you think, honey?' I didn't realize we were going to have to do more than just sign a paper. I gave both the kids cameras, and they hid in the bushes and took pictures."

VENICE BEACH

"I live at the beach, so the beach is everything to me. I drive by my *Baywatch* lifeguard tower almost every day: Tower 14. I used to go there every day and jump in the water at five, six in the morning. I was always the first one in; I wanted to be a good example. It was fun—best job in Hollywood."

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Int'l. Airport

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N. SEPULVEDA BLVD

40

MILES

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VENICE

Los Angeles 
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40

ANDERSON: ELLEN VON UNWERTH/APT - COMMERCE; STANLEY CUP: REUTERS/CORBIS; MALIBU: LES WALKER/NEWPORT/CORBIS; PITA: RANDY MAYOR/FOODPIX; DEER: RANDY M. KENNETH/CORBIS; LACHAPPELLE AND ANDERSON: AXEL KOSTER/CORBIS; MATCHBOOK: DAVIES - STARR; ANDERSON AND KID ROCK: ERIC ESTEAD/AP/GETTY IMAGES; HENNER: KURTNEY JOHANSSON/CORBIS; VICECITY: COURTESY OF VICECITY SANTA MONICA/KOR HOTEL GROUP - BAYWATCH: BAYWATCH CO/TOUWER 12 PRODS/VEEBA COLLECTION



ASHAMED OF HIS LOOK, JARED LETS SHOW ALL ATTENTION PLEASE LOOK AWAY!

LIFE ON MARS



HE USES JACK DANIELS AS MOUTHWASH. HE STARS IN HUGE MOVIES, BUT INSISTS HIS BAND IS JUST AS

BY ZOE WOLFF PHOTOGRAPHY BY DOUG INGLESH

IMPORTANT AS HIS ACTING. WHAT IS WRONG WITH JARED LETO?

JARED LETO is having his day in the sun. On a cloudless September afternoon, backstage at the KROQ-sponsored Inland Invasion festival in San Bernardino, California, he lounges on the faux-chenille couch in his trailer. His band, 30 Seconds to Mars, has just finished playing an hour-long set to a rapt audience of thousands, sharing a bill with Axl Rose—"I mean, my fucking god, Guns N' Roses!" Leto exclaims.

On the table in front of him is a half-eaten plate of Mexican food and a plastic case full of makeup. These days, he's partial to a goth-lite look: heavy black eyeliner and dark shadow rimming his famous cerulean eyes. Leto, 34, is disarmingly excitable about his appearance in front of the festival crowd: "I used to say to my brother, 'Will we ever have a song that people know all the words to, like U2?' Now we have that, with 'The Kill.' The people were singing!" This, Leto believes, might be the crowning moment of his musical career: "The graveyard is littered with the bodies of the failed dilettantes who have walked before us. I don't know if that sounds arrogant, but I think it's a fact. Whether you like 30 Seconds to Mars or not, you can't deny the legitimacy it has for the people who choose to believe."

A decade ago, Jared Leto inspired swoons with his acting debut as Jordan Catalano, the elusive, illiterate high-school hottie in *My So-Called Life*. The cult TV show launched Leto's Hollywood career, and it may have been a prelude to his musical inclinations: Catalano had his own band, Frozen Embryos. But in real life, Leto's rock endeavors have enjoyed attention mostly as a punch line: ridiculed by critics as "generic mall-punk corporate garbage" and "looking like he spends all his time locked in his room blasting Evanescence and writing angry poetry." >>

The KROQ show is later derided on the blog Stereogum as "Jared in a silly costume, cursing a lot."

Even the blogosphere, though, would have to (grudgingly) admit that Leto has worked hard to distinguish his band from the sorry cavalcade of Hollywood stars' hit-free dabblings in rock—Keanu Reeves' Dog Star, Russell Crowe's 30 Odd Foot of Grunts or Kevin Costner and His Band, to name but three. For the first 30 Seconds to Mars record, which was released in 2002, he apparently forbade promoters from using his name. When that album failed to resonate, he spent three years working on the next one: *A Beautiful Lie*. To get it made, Leto exported his bandmates to far-flung film sets so they could record during off-camera hours, and weathered regime changes at Virgin Records until chairman/CEO Jason Flom put him on the priority pile. Since the album's release in August 2005, 30 Seconds to Mars have toured almost constantly, appearing on this year's Warped Tour and at Lollapalooza.

Last August, the band's aggressively emo single, "The Kill," peaked at No. 3 on *Billboard's* Modern Rock chart, and the video for the song, a stylized homage to *The Shining* Leto himself directed under the alias Bartholomew Cubbins, won the MTV2 award at the 2006 VMAs. "I'm not

an idiot," he says stridently. "I knew I was going to take a beating, and I did. But to be singled out as an exception to the rule is quite an honor."



THE FOLLOWING MORNING, Leto is back at home in Los Angeles, curled up like a cat on his sofa. He's dressed all in black, and wearing a fedora. The eye makeup is gone, making him look more vulnerable—something of his trademark onscreen. In almost every movie he's been in, Leto has endured sickness, mutilation or death. When preparing

for a role, Leto puts his body through hell—he got so skinny for *Requiem for a Dream* he would pass out on set. This, he says, is why he doesn't do many films. "I'm pretty masochistic. I kill myself for my craft—literally."

Off camera, however, Leto doesn't exactly have a golden reputation. Not only do bloggers hate his band, but there's a long list of girls who think he's kind of a douche bag, too. Mention his name, and it's not uncommon to hear a story about a friend of a friend who has been the victim of his Lothario ways. "Really? I have a bad reputation?" he asks, with a kid-in-a-candy-store smile. He's even more >>



FROM LEFT: NOW, LEADING 30 SECONDS AT INLAND INVASION; THEN, LEADING FROZEN EMBRYOS AS DREAMY JORDAN CATALANO.

CHUTES AND LETO

TRANSITIONING FROM HOLLYWOOD A-LISTER TO ROCK GOD AIN'T EASY. SUPERMODELS WANT TO BED YOU. FANS WANT TO HARASS YOU. DIRECTORS WANT TO FATTEN YOU. ROLL THE DICE AND HELP JARED GET TO THE ROCK SHOW!



LOOK
WHO
WE'VE
GOT
OUR
HANES
ON
NOW



PERFECT T

Soft and tagless. Kevin thinks it's perfect for any occasion.



HEAR HIS BAND. GET HIS STYLE.

HANES.COM



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PERFECT ON STAGE AND OFF.

notorious for working his magic on babes in the one-name-only category: Cameron, Scarlett and most recently, Lindsay.

"She's just a girl I worked with," he says of Lohan, though paparazzi shots of the two during the filming of the forthcoming *Chapter 27*, in which he stars as John Lennon's assassin Mark David Chapman, would suggest otherwise. At least he doesn't deny romancing Diaz or Johansson. "Once you see photos of two people together for months, coming out of the grocery store together or buying condoms," he says, laughing, "you can assume ..."

Leto has made an exception to his no-press-in-my-house rule for *Blender*, but—ever vigilant about his privacy—he asks that we not go into detail about the place. There's not much to tell, anyway. Until recently, he had been living in a 1,200-square-foot pad in Hollywood, and his virgin real-estate investment, which he shares with his brother, Shannon, and his dog, Judas, bears the still-unpacked markings of life on the road. Aside from some expensive-looking modern furniture in the living room and a few pieces of edgy art, the house is pretty much bare. The framed gold record for *A Beautiful Lie* is propped unceremoniously against a wall.

Leto proves evasive when it comes to personal matters. If he doesn't flat out dismiss a subject as "irrelevant," he engages in meaningless wordplay (*Blender*: "Are you religious?" Leto: "I'm pious"); playground riddling (*Blender*: "Is that your makeup case?" Leto: "Is it yours?"); or seeks distraction in his BlackBerry. He loves to pontificate, but often tempers the pomposity with self-deprecating wisecracks. Stubbornly committed to revealing himself only through his work, Leto is cagey about his extracurricular life:

Blender: "Do you not drink because of a checkered past with drugs and alcohol?"

Leto: "There's a bottle of Jack Daniels in the kitchen."

Blender: "So you do drink?"

Leto: "I use it as mouthwash."

Blender: "So you're sober?"

Leto: [Bellowing in a baritone] "Sobriety." He laughs. "I only have so many hours in the day. It's important to me to choose them well."

On the subject of his childhood, he's as sealed off as a crime scene. "I don't think it's relevant," he snaps.

Here's what we do know: Leto and Shannon, who plays drums in 30 Seconds to Mars, lived an itinerant childhood, from Louisiana to a commune in Colorado to Brazil to Alaska. Their bohemian mother, Constance, took them to see rock concerts and performance art. Dad was absent and they were "food-stamp poor," Leto says. He worked a stint at a demolition derby, shoplifted and spent time in prison—or so



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: FAT JARED IN *CHAPTER 27*; GAUNT JARED IN *REQUIEM FOR A DREAM*; ABOUT-TO-GET-PUMMELED-TO-A-PULP PLATINUM JARED IN *FIGHT CLUB*.

he's suggested in the past. "We didn't grow up with G.I. Joes or TV," Shannon says. "We were beating on pots and pans and playing guitars that belonged to my mom's hippie friends. We grew up thinking, 'We're artists.'"

Leto arrived in Hollywood when he was 20, and while making *My So-Called Life* and the movies that followed, continued to play music with Shannon. As the band formalized, Leto juggled his two careers—though he thinks of them as very distinct. "I'm not an actor wanting to be a musician. I'm not a musician wanting to be an actor. I

photos taken of him in all his blubbery 205-pound glory. "It was actually very painful. What I was eating and how I was eating was grotesque. Imagine you're at your most stuffed at Thanksgiving—that's where I started every meal. I was throwing up in the back of my mouth. Three doctors were like, 'You have to stop what you're doing immediately.'"

At one point during shooting, Leto's cholesterol count went up to 360—the healthy average for a man of his age is 200—and he contracted gout. Eventually, the pain it caused became so bad that he had to keep a wheelchair on set. "It definitely took years off my life," he says.

Months after wrapping *Chapter 27*, Leto has returned to waiflike proportions, but his feet are still healing from the gout, so he needs to wear a bulbous pair of Crocs whenever he can. He says he couldn't even think about music while working on the film. "Anybody who suggests I'm committed to one thing more than another should look back to four months ago, when I was 65 pounds heavier," he says. "But eight days after the film wrapped, I was on the road with the band touring. I'm able to focus on what's needed at the time, otherwise I'd probably lose my head."

Would he be willing to give up acting altogether for the band? "I don't look at it in terms of how one thing takes away from another," he says, putting down his cereal bowl. "This is an exciting time. It's never been done before—for someone who is a known in another creative world to have the success, the legitimacy, the devotion, the passion that 30 Seconds to Mars has. The impossible has become possible." [BLENDER]



"I'M PRETTY MASOCHISTIC. I KILL MYSELF FOR MY CRAFT—LITERALLY."

happen to do both of those and more."

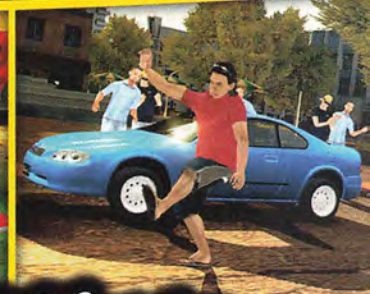
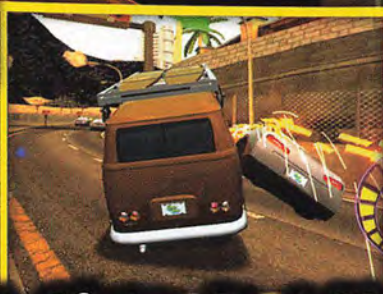
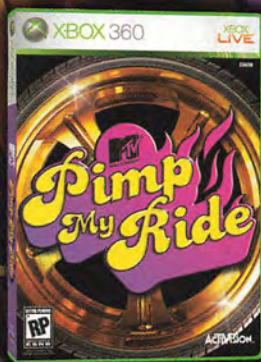
Leto says neither vocation takes precedence, although he turned down a leading role in Clint Eastwood's *Flags of Our Fathers* to go on tour opening for the Used. "I choose my films carefully, and there's often a dark journey involved that takes a long time to recover from," he explains.

For breakfast today, Leto is eating a bowl of cinnamon-flavored organic oats with soy milk, not much of a meal for someone who claims he's trying to put on weight—this after trimming the fat he acquired, sans prosthetics, to play Chapman. "Here, let me show you a picture!" he says, bolting upright and whipping out his always-at-the-ready BlackBerry. "This is the real fucking deal. This isn't even in the movie. I could show you some shit that would break down the walls of Jericho!" On the tiny screen, he displays several elegant black-and-white

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Scott Weiland

A TRUE ROCK SURVIVOR ON THE CITY'S BEST PLACES TO TREAT YOUR BODY BADLY, DRESS EXPENSIVELY AND DATE MODELS ON THE CHEAP

ENCINO

MARK MAHONEY'S SHAMROCK TATTOO

9026 WEST SUNSET BOULEVARD,
HOLLYWOOD

"Mark Mahoney does amazing portraits. He did one of my wife on my left arm."

SHERMAN
OAKS

TOI ON SUNSET

7505 1/2 SUNSET BOULEVARD,
LOS ANGELES

"Before I signed my record deal, I drove models from the Nicole Bordeaux agency around in my '65 Chrysler: \$8.50 an hour. That's how I met my wife, Mary; I'd drive her around. We fell in love instantly, but she was 16 and I was 23, so we couldn't really, you know, do anything about it. We'd go to this Thai place downstairs from the modeling office and share steamed rice with chili sauce because we didn't have money. That was the last job I ever had."

JONES HOLLYWOOD

7205 SANTA MONICA BOULEVARD,
WEST HOLLYWOOD

"I think this used to be one of [influential radio DJ] Rodney Bingenheimer's clubs, and it has a great vibe. Full Jack Daniels bottles line the entire façade. Checkered tablecloths, the best strip steak, spaghetti and meatballs, great jukebox. People always treated us right, even when we were just coming up."

YVES SAINT LAURENT BOUTIQUE

RODEO DRIVE, BEVERLY HILLS

"Stefano, this new designer they have there, has the best, most creative vision about what's sexy in rock & roll. Which, from my perspective, is anything other than '80s shit. Dude, I went to high school in the '80s—if you were there and lived through it, the '80s weren't all that cool."



HOLLYWOOD BLVD.

HOLLYWOOD

WEST
HOLLYWOOD

W. 3RD ST.

WILSHIRE BLVD.

S. VERMONT AVE.

THIRD POINT

MALIBU

"I grew up and went to high school in Huntington Beach and learned to surf there. Little Dune in Malibu is great because there aren't massive crowds. But I also love Third Point simply 'cause if you get there early enough, it's a classic long-boarding spot for old men like me."

BEVERLY
HILLS

FIT FOR KIDS

1106 NORTH LA CIENEGA BOULEVARD,
WEST HOLLYWOOD

"This one really shows my age. It's a gym/playland extravaganza. If you're hungover, you can just sit there while your kids go crazy, and you don't have to worry. They keep very good track of your children, so there's no chance of them getting lost or leaving or anything."

THE LITTLE DOOR

8164 WEST THIRD STREET,
LOS ANGELES

"When I was making my solo record with Daniel Lanois, he'd bring me to this Mediterranean restaurant, which two of his friends own, and I felt such a strong connection to the place. At the time, we lived right around the corner, so when Mary and I decided to get married, we picked the Little Door, and it was the most beautiful day of our lives. When you're there you feel like you're eating at someone's house."

VENICE BLVD.

VENICE

SLAUSON AVE.



Scott Weiland:
"Shirts are sooo
East Coast."

THE BUCCANEER LOUNGE

70 WEST SIERRA MADRE BOULEVARD,
SIERRA MADRE

"Another great bar is in a little town many people in Los Angeles don't even know exists: Sierra Madre. This little place is amazing. I used to have friends up there—one of my musical mentors, Tony Morrison, turned me on to so many great punk and indie bands, and before I started making records myself, he taught me a lot about musical ethics."



MONTEREY PARK

SMALL'S

5574 MELROSE AVENUE, HOLLYWOOD

"When I think of the period between '88 through '91, and even leading into my junkie years, I think of this place—it was right across from Astro and Paramount Studios. It was a great rock & roll bar where bands would come from all over and play acoustic sets. I used to shoot dope in the bathroom, but it wasn't the greatest of spots for that. Very small."

912 EAST THIRD STREET

LOS ANGELES

"That's the first place I lived in Los Angeles, downtown near Alameda, in the loft district. This was 1988. Now a lot of yuppies live there—or at least that's what we called them back then, I don't know if people still use that word. Al's Bar is where we used to hang out, but it's gone now. It was a real easy place to play. We were local and they'd book anybody: punk bands, art bands, speed-metal bands, anybody."

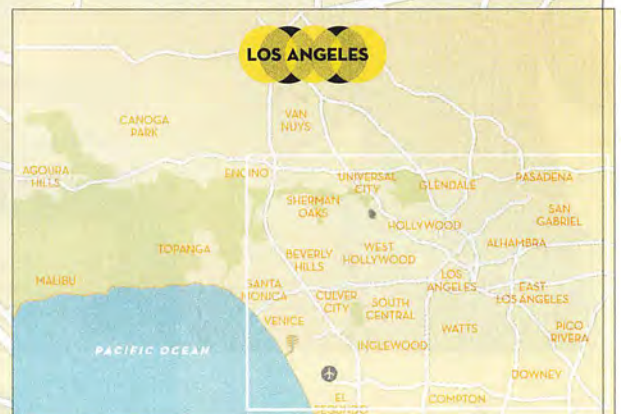
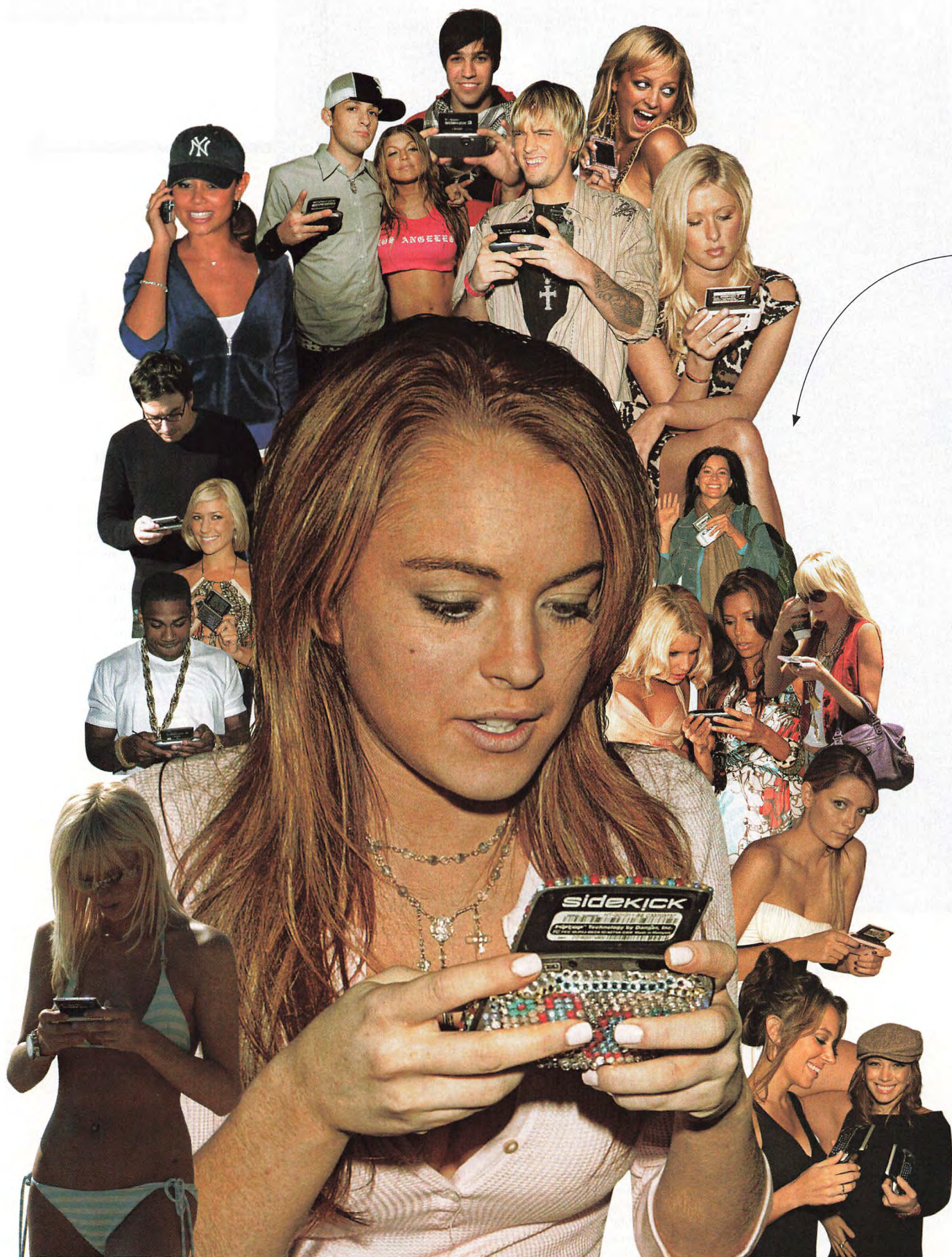


ILLUSTRATION BY HAISAM HUSSEIN



LOHAN: BAUER GRIFFIN.COM; HILTON: TOBY GANNHAM/SPLASH NEWS; KELLY: ARNOLD TURNER/WIREIMAGE.COM; CUNILLI: GREGG DEGUIRE/WIREIMAGE.COM; FALLON: RICHARD BEETHAM/SPLASH NEWS; MINNILL: BEN VICTOR/BAUER GRIFFIN.COM; MADDEN AND FERGIE: MARIO ANZILINO/POST-SENTZ; ALEXANDER: WYMAN/WIREIMAGE.COM; CARTER: WYMAN/WIREIMAGE.COM; CHAZER: WYMAN/WIREIMAGE.COM; RICHIE: FRACZER HARRISON/GETTY IMAGES; HILTON: FERNANDO LEON/GETTY IMAGES; VERGARA: RONALD ASSADORIAN/SPLASH; SIMPSON AND LINDSAY: CLINTON H. WALLACE/GLOBE PHOTOS; STEWART: LONDON ENTERTAINMENT/SPLASH; BARTON: STEPHEN SUGERMAN/GETTY IMAGES; DUFF SISTERS: CLINTON H. WALLACE/GLOBE PHOTOS



+ NOTHING GETS BETWEEN Amaya and her Sidekick. Thumbs a-texting, she poses in a little black dress in the dim light of the bar at the West Hollywood club Area, her dark eyes so firmly fixed to the screen that she's oblivious to the gentle riot of excitement all around: Nicole Richie scampering across the dance floor in front of her, the pack of lupine-stubbled dudes converging right and left, the video camera that shoots her from behind.

When she finally looks up, 29-year-old Amaya Brecher (who describes herself as "an unemployed TV host," then adds, "I was on *The Real World*"—then offers, with a trouper's chipper scowl, "Hawaii") estimates that she spends "80 percent of the time most nights out" on her Sidekick mobile phone, IM'ing, e-mailing and surfing the Web. "I even text my friends across the table, or right next to me. That way you can talk about a guy, or strategize getting away from him, at the same time that you're talking to him."

In some ways, wireless-communications devices such as Sidekicks (and, in descending order of coolness, BlackBerrys, Qs and Treos) have changed life in Hollywood the same way they've changed the rest of the world. On a break from recording Fall Out Boy's new album, the group's lyricist and bassist Pete Wentz (who earlier this year suffered the 21st-century indignity of having full-frontal self-portraits from his Sidekick released onto the Internet) says that communicating on a Sidekick creates a sense of "detached attachment. You're able to connect and be so

much more global, and yet everybody's detached from everybody now. A Sidekick is the same thing as a beer, except you don't have to be 21 to drink it."

And yet, since its launch in 2002, Sidekick has had a special relationship with celebrities and with the entertainment industry. Sidekick's functions are perfectly suited to celebrities' practical needs, and to some of their psychopathologies. Factor in strategic marketing, enhanced by serendipity—when Paris Hilton's was hacked in February 2005 and its contents posted online (including topless photos of the heiress making out with a woman called "Eggplant Dyke Ass"), the T-Mobile stores in New York reported a major spike in sales—and, like the iPod, a gadget had become a celebrity in its own right.

A drastically abbreviated list of stars with Sidekicks includes Eva Longoria, Jenna Jameson, Hilary Duff, Nicole Richie, Mischa Barton, Seal, Lil Jon, Kristin Cavallari, Tony Hawk and NBA Dallas Mavericks owner Mark Cuban, who blogs on his from courtside. Jennifer Aniston's started ringing (actually, howling; a custom, wolfish ring tone) in the middle of her 2004 *Primetime Live* interview with Diane Sawyer. When the Pussycat Dolls won Best Dance Video at this year's MTV Video Music Awards, Melody Thornton pulled out her Sidekick to remind herself whom to thank. My Chemical Romance spent their downtime at this issue's cover shoot tapping away on their machines. Sidekicks have twisted plots on *The O.C.*, *Veronica Mars* and *Gilmore Girls*, among many TV shows. And this summer, in the film *The Devil Wears Prada*, a Sidekick served as cellular handcuffs for the beleaguered

fashion-magazine assistant played by Anne Hathaway; when she finally emancipated herself (by throwing the thing in a Parisian fountain), audiences cheered.

Like celebrity, a Sidekick is a complex product made of several parts. Its software and servers were developed by Danger Inc., in Palo Alto, California; hardware is manufactured in Japan by Sharp; and service is sold exclusively by T-Mobile, the Bellevue, Washington-based U.S. subsidiary of Deutsche Telekom, the world's third-largest mobile provider.

According to M:Metrics, a Seattle market-research firm, Sidekick has fewer than 400,000 subscribers, compared with BlackBerry's 5.5 million. But Sidekick's cultural profile is higher than those figures might suggest, since the product appeals

bles the one impulse a celeb's small-minded boyfriend or girlfriend could never abide: the freedom to connect with anyone, anytime and anywhere.

“THEY GAVE IT to rappers,” groans Peter Rojas, editor of the tech blog *engadget.com*, “which is such a clichéd way to market your device. But it worked.”

Before T-Mobile gave the Sidekick away, however, they waved it in front of rappers' faces, backstage at the BET Awards in 2002. “The whole hip-hop world was already texting on their pagers,” says Jeff Folino, who's been Sidekick's product manager at T-Mobile since the device's launch. “This was the pager on steroids. And hip-hop culture has always been about bragging, having everything first, so we knew the product would fit right in.”

Folino realized he'd scored when Bow Wow's mother called the next day: “When are they going to be available? Bow Wow wants one.” The phone rang again; Def Jam Records invited Folino to the company's New York headquarters to talk about “possibilities for partnership”—although, as Folino recalls, the company's executives mostly wanted a closer look at the machine. Lyor Cohen, then the label's CEO, “flipped out,” and his employees swarmed after Folino down the halls: “Open it! Close it! Send me an e-mail from it!” Since that day, Folino says by phone from his office in Seattle, “I can understand a little how it feels to be a celebrity.”

The original Sidekick I hit the market that fall, followed by a color version in June of 2003. The machine's music-video premiere was in “Excuse Me Miss” (2003), when Jay-Z appeared using a Sidekick while rapping about a brand-new kind of flirt-

HAYLIE DUFF TAKES “PICTURES OF EVERYTHING” WITH HER SIDEKICK. BUT, SHE ADDS, NO “BAD” — MEANING NUDE — PICTURES.

to a young, hip crowd of tastemakers: The majority of subscribers are aged 18 to 24. And 2006 has been a very good year for Sidekick: Between January and August, the number of subscribers jumped about 30 percent, a surge that likely owes much to this summer's launch of Sidekick III.

But numbers alone don't begin to tell the story of young Hollywood's romance with the Sidekick. It's a fantasy of untrammelled intimacy, with a companion that ena-

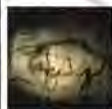
A BRIEF HISTORY OF COMMUNICATION

Before there were **SIDEKICKS** and **TREOS** there were sharp rocks and stick-figure drawings of woolly mammoths



30,000 B.C.

Oldest known cave painting in Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc, France, roughly translated as “Zeppelin Rutz.”



1800 B.C.

Crude alphabetic system developed in Egypt, then rejected once suitable accompanying sing-along tune proves impossible to devise



62 B.C.

Horse-driven postal system developed in ancient Rome; early disgruntled postal workers forced to take out frustration with only daggers or inconvenient siege catapults



1605

First newspaper printed by Johann Carolus in Strasbourg, France; 421 years later, “Ziggy” still isn't funny

1792

Semaphore system for communication via relay put into place by two French engineers, the Chappe brothers, and no, not all of the flags were white

1849

Original archaic telephone created by Italian inventor Antonio Meucci in Havana, 27 years before Alexander Graham Bell is credited for doing the same; Cuba's place at the forefront of technological advancement remains unchallenged

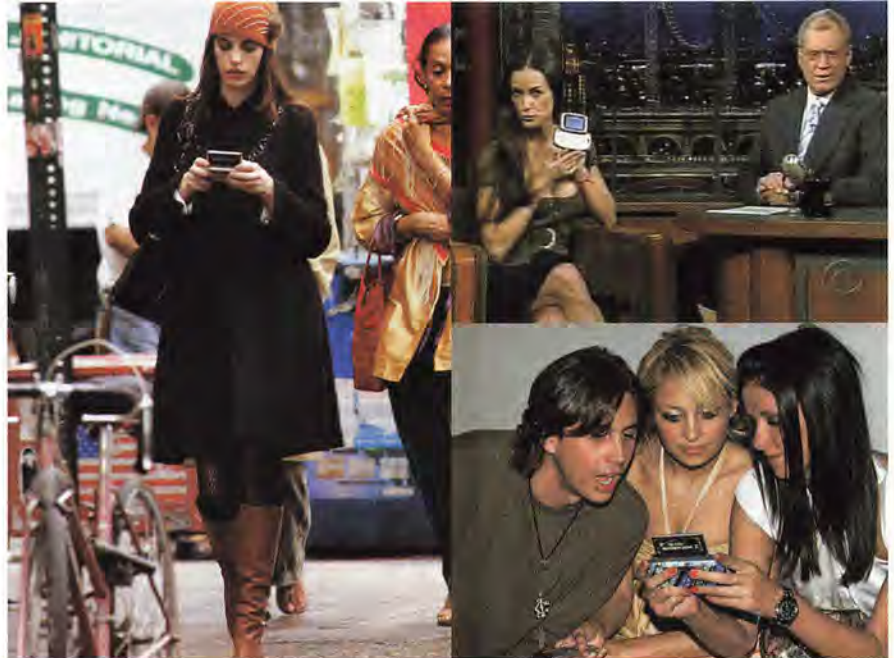
ing—"He two-ways her, so she writes back/Smiley faces after all of her phrases" before wondering (briefly) if they're "caught in the Matrix," then dropping that thought as fast as he named it.

Folino laughs: "Everybody thinks we must have paid Jay-Z a million dollars to do that, but we didn't know about it until it happened." Soon Sidekick was making regular cameos in rap lyrics. Sometimes the machine was cause for bragging (E-40's "I Got Dat Work": "I got my Sidekick/I got my T-Mobile phone ..."). More often, texting was a metaphor for sex (Nick Cannon's "Feelin' Freaky": "I'm not trying to romance you/I'm just trying to get them pants loose/Let's get private, two-way text me/T-Mobile Sidekick").

Some say Sidekick's cultural-crossover moment occurred at the MTV Movie Awards in May 2003, when Diddy diddled his Sidekick while sitting with Demi Moore and Ashton Kutcher. That encounter's apparent viral consequence was evident the following month when, as Danger's publicist Matthew Flegal recounts with awe, "Demi Moore took her Sidekick on *Letterman*. She was literally IM'ing with Ashton as she sat onstage! We were just in shock."

"All of a sudden," says Folino, "it was not just people who were watching hip-hop videos. Everybody was talking about Demi and Ashton, and there she is. On her Sidekick."

MOST KIDDIES OUT there in TV land understand that people in the entertainment industry are driven by a desperate need to be cool: to know the right people, to have the right toys, to be seen at the right parties. What we sometimes forget is that these people are also ruthlessly efficient, and their decisions



✦ SIDEKICK AFICIONADOS. CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: ANNE HATHAWAY, NOT LOOKING WHERE SHE'S GOING IN *THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA*; DEMI MOORE FLAUNTING HERS ON *LETTERMAN*, JUNE 2003; NICKY HILTON SHOWS NICOLE RICHIE A PHOTO OF A SANDWICH FOR FUTURE REFERENCE.

about what's cool are always, in the end, ones born of convenience and economics.

When Haylie Duff calls *Blender* (from her Sidekick) as she's preparing for an evening performance of *Hairspray* on Broadway, she admits immediately to being "addicted" to the machine, giggling that "it gets me in trouble sometimes. I use it wherever you're not supposed to be using it: in movie theaters, on planes, on set." Moreover, she says, "My Sidekick has saved my life when it comes to business. You're on a set and you can't get a phone call. They send an e-mail that says you need to be here, or this is what is happening with this deal. It's great because it's like a paper trail. I have a copy of everything."

E-40 negotiates contracts with his. Ditto Pete Wentz, who says, "Right when I

land, wherever I am, I have everything sent to me," and though "it speeds up business conversations, it also gives you a minute to think about what to say, before you say it." He believes his Sidekick also gave Fall Out Boy an edge in the polling for this year's MTV Viewer's Choice Award. "We were able to keep updating our Web site up to the point when we arrived at the VMAs."

Celebrities could do all of the same things on lots of other phones; but tech experts say the erotic experience of Sidekick sets it apart. Josh Rubin, editor of the design blog *coolhunting.com*, and a former cellphone designer for Motorola, explains, "The mechanism of the screen swiveling open is very satisfying. There's a little tension as you start to open it, and then it swings on its own, and snaps into place." Screen above, keypad below, bumpers on either side—it looks like a tiny proscenium.

Tom Samiljan, who writes for Yahoo! Tech, adds that the Sidekick's keyboard is more comfortable for extended bouts of texting than any smart phone's, and its cartoonish interface is as intuitive and easy to use as an early Macintosh operating system. Plus, "there are all these fun little nifty details," Samiljan says. "The Sidekick III has a self-portrait mirror next to its camera lens, which helps you focus on yourself so you can center your head in the frame. It's all about 'Hey! Look at me! I can take a picture of me!'" This feature is a boon for consumers hooked on Web sites such as MySpace and Facebook, virtual worlds where, as in Hollywood, you won't register on anybody's radar unless you give yourself over to exhibitionistic narcissism.

Haylie Duff, after using Sidekick IIs throughout filming *Material Girls* with her sister Hilary, got a Sidekick III. "I use the camera lot," she says. "I take pictures of eve-

HATHAWAY: SPLASH NEWS AND PICTURES; HILTON AND RICHIE: ZACK SECKLER/CORBIS

1965
First interoffice e-mail system developed by loveless MIT students, followed soon afterward by first HR seminar discouraging mass distribution of Raquel Welch bikini photos



1983
First handheld cellular phones released to market, promptly left in taxis



2002
T-Mobile introduces the Sidekick, forcing a nation of high school students to learn how to type



rything," but, she adds, no "bad"—meaning nude—pictures.

So what does she take pictures of?

"I get these necklaces in the mail, and I put them on my dog, and I take a picture and put it on e-mail and send it to my friend's boyfriend."

It's hard to know exactly what to say to this. Haylie clears her throat: "You know, any random little thing."

+ THE SIDEKICK ATTAINED true cultural ubiquity in fall 2004, with the launch of Sidekick II, heralded by a party produced by top Hollywood promoter Brent Bolthouse and a national TV commercial featuring a gumbo of stars: Snoop Dogg, Burt Reynolds, Wayne Newton, Paris Hilton, Molly Shannon, Wee-Man from *Jackass*. Proudly, Jeff Folino notes that, in this group, any viewer could find "a celebrity just like them, using the product in a real way."

Valid or not, the sense that we're all-Sidekicking-together seems to apply reflexively—not only to plebian consumers, but also to stars—and contributed to at least one celebrity's well-known proclivity to put "any random little thing" (including "bad" photos) on his Sidekick.

Pete Wentz was caught with his pants down a year after the Paris Hilton Sidekick breach. (Though described in most press coverage as "hacking," the Hilton debacle was an old-fashioned con job, in which a Massachusetts teenager talked a T-Mobile store sales clerk into giving him a user name and password for the company's internal customer-service Web site, from which he obtained Paris Hilton's phone number, reset her password and then downloaded her Sidekick's address book and pictures from Danger's servers.) In the wake of that story, Wentz eagerly jumped on the hacker idea to explain his own exposure. When his pictures first broke, Wentz wrote on a blog that "someone hacked into my Sidekick and took pictures off of it."

Right now, that "someone" is probably out there having a thumpin' three-way with the Loch Ness Monster and the Yeti. In all likelihood, there is no such thing as a Sidekick hacker. Jeff Folino of T-Mobile says, "The term 'hacked' gets used pretty loosely. It's a way to divert responsibility from yourself." Today, Wentz admits he's "not completely sure" how his naked pictures got out. He lost a Sidekick in Texas, from which someone may have retrieved the photos. He also thinks that he may have chosen a secret password that would be easy for a fan to guess.

Where does he keep his naked pictures now? Wentz jokes, "I don't do that anymore." Still, as a businessman, he thinks the experience was not so bad: "It's probably the most embarrassing thing that happened in

WHEN THE PUSSYCAT DOLLS
WON BEST DANCE VIDEO AT THIS
YEAR'S VMAS,

MELODY THORNTON PULLED OUT HER SIDEKICK

TO REMIND HERSELF WHOM
TO THANK.



my life, but how many more people know about my band that wouldn't have known about us before?"

One class of ancillary players in the entertainment industry who have a lot to gain from the omnipresence of the Sidekick are gossip bloggers. David Hauslaib of jossip.com sings hosannas to the texting and e-mail capabilities of smart phones. "Now anybody—celebs, flacks, paparazzi, people in clubs—can act as sources, and get information to Jossip instantaneously." (The night Ashlee Simpson and Wentz played tonsil hockey in a New York nightclub, Jossip was inundated with snapshots of the two in mid-hookup.)

Hauslaib's "utmost hope" is that one day the Sidekick will bust a hole in the Hollywood publicity machine: He'll land a story where a publicist reports an item via Sidekick in one way, "and a starlet uses her Sidekick to tell things in a different way."

The day that happens will be, perhaps,

the final proof that Sidekicks have won celebrities' hearts and truly become extensions of them. For some starlets, it's fair to say the Sidekick (like so many boyfriends) is a fashion statement masquerading as a means of connection. "Paris Hilton uses hers to pretend she's on the phone, to pretend she's too busy to talk to whoever comes up to her," Hauslaib observes. "Half the time when she's shown IM'ing, she's actually not doing anything."

+ LATELY, WHEN PARIS is shown not actually doing anything, she's often not doing it on a BlackBerry instead of a Sidekick. Lindsay Lohan, too, seems to have graduated to the BlackBerry, which is perceived to be more grown-up. (Amaya, *The Real World* alum, sneers that BlackBerrys "are for the VH1 crowd.")

If Paris and Lindsay's defection foretells a trend, it seems to be a spontaneous one. A spokesperson for RIM, the manufacturer of BlackBerry, says, "Marketing to Hollywood is not something that RIM has targeted so far," and a T-Mobile publicist says her company (which sells service on both devices) considers Sidekick, not BlackBerry, to be a "more Hollywood" product.

But nothing, as John DeLorean taught us, stays cool forever. Today's dark horse in the race for Hollywood's wireless heart was once the lone competitor: Motorola, whose two-way pager got blown out of the water by Sidekick, but whose new phones, including the Q and KRZR, have the company poised for a comeback.

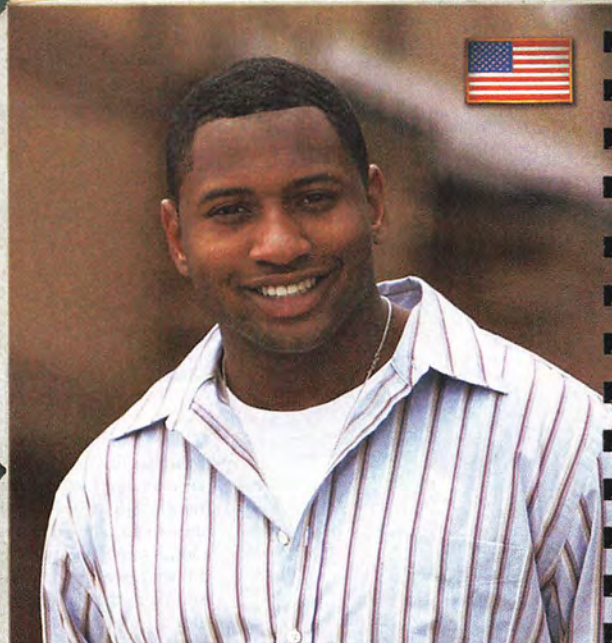
David Pinsky, Motorola's bottle-blond, blue-eyed 40-year-old head of entertainment marketing, is widely credited with having invented the current techniques of celebrity tech evangelism, and may have been the first to practice "seeding"—putting gadgets directly in the hands of celebrities. He's never done gift bags, he's never shilled at awards shows and he's never done paid product placement. Just "relationships," he explains, based on one-on-one meetings with stars.

Pinsky casts his net wide ("Lauren Bacall is very tech-savvy") and says he never turns down a celebrity who wants a free phone ("Nicollette Sheridan came in here five years ago when she couldn't get a job. I treated her like a star, and now look at her"). And—though it may seem paradoxical in an industry where success depends on relationships—he doesn't take the vicissitudes of fortune seriously.

"Do my feelings get hurt if a star switches phones? No," he says. "I just tell myself that the next new phone we get, I'm going to put in her hands"—a remark that underscores some of the unsettling aspects of human relationships revealed and heightened by the wireless revolution. Loyalty, trust and dependability are all a bit of a hustle. [BLENDER]



PARIS HILTON
MAKES A
RARE PARTY
APPEARANCE
TO FETE
THE NEW
SIDEKICK III.



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TINY NAYLOR'S

CORNER OF SUNSET AND LA BREA, HOLLYWOOD

"Tiny Naylor's was a drive-in from the 1950s that was demolished in the '80s. Waitresses wore roller skates and little skirts, and they'd roll up to your car with a tray that attached. I ate breakfast with my grandfather there all the time. It was a big hangout for punk rockers in the mid-'70s. The architecture was amazing, too, like a giant spaceship."

SOUTH WILLARD

8038 WEST THIRD STREET, LOS ANGELES

"South Willard is a clothing store that always has something good. I've gotten some weird necklaces and sweaters and T-shirts there."

AMOEBAS MUSIC

6400 SUNSET BOULEVARD, HOLLYWOOD

"It's a mecca for music—it's overwhelming, but you can find anything. I went yesterday and picked up the TV on the Radio record. I haven't done a proper excavation, but you can go and in 15 minutes, you leave with your hands full."

PUERTO ESCONDIDO

10321 HAWTHORNE BOULEVARD, INGLEWOOD

"I tell people to go here on Sundays. It's a Mexican restaurant in East L.A., and they have a mariachi band and dancing and really good seafood. It's relaxed, but kind of a party, too. We shot a scene in my video for 'Girl' here. It's a pretty authentic place."

THE GRIFFITH PARK RAILROADS

440 CRYSTAL SPRINGS DRIVE, LOS ANGELES

"There is a miniature choo-choo train that drives around the park, toward the edge near the freeway. It's my son's favorite place to go, so we come here a lot. It's cool because I can ride in the train with him. And there's a conductor with a conductor outfit."

THE GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY

2800 EAST OBSERVATORY ROAD, LOS ANGELES

"An obvious landmark, but I always take my friends from out of town. On a clear day, you can see the ocean and the harbor in Long Beach and Pasadena. It's one of the last places in L.A. that is still in intact from when I was young. *Rebel Without a Cause* was also filmed here."

OCEAN WAY RECORDING

6050 SUNSET BOULEVARD, HOLLYWOOD

"I've spend a lot of time at this recording studio. I've made three albums (*Sea Change*, *Mutations* and *The Information*) and a million different projects here. Frank Sinatra and the Mamas & the Papas recorded here. It still has the old mixing board and the rooms are fairly untouched, and it just has a magic sound to it. Everything recorded here comes out with a little sheen of gold."

ZUMA BEACH

30000 PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY, MALIBU

"I would take my producer Nigel [Godrich] here. It's his favorite place in the city. It's the English person's ideal of what L.A. is—because of the sun and the cliffs. I think it's the best place to go see the sunset."



Beck impatiently awaits his lunch guests, Kenu and Tom Cruise.

MONTEREY PARK



CITY OF MONTEREY PARK

"I was really obsessed with this neighborhood 10 years ago. I'd go every weekend. It's mostly Chinese. In the '90s, there was an influx of 750,000 or more Chinese who left Hong Kong to come here. They built massive shopping malls and movieplexes. The street signs and supermarkets are all in Chinese. When you go to the movies, the concession stands have mung bean Popsicles and dried shrimps instead of M&M's."

CLEARMAN'S STEAK 'N STEIN INN

9545 EAST WHITTIER BOULEVARD, PICO RIVERA

"It's a steakhouse that looks like a giant mountain lodge with fake snow on it year-round. The waitresses all wear Swiss halter-top dresses. The bar is probably 30 years old and it's just, like, frozen in time. I took Stephen Malkmus there for a big dinner recently."



PICO RIVERA

LOS ANGELES

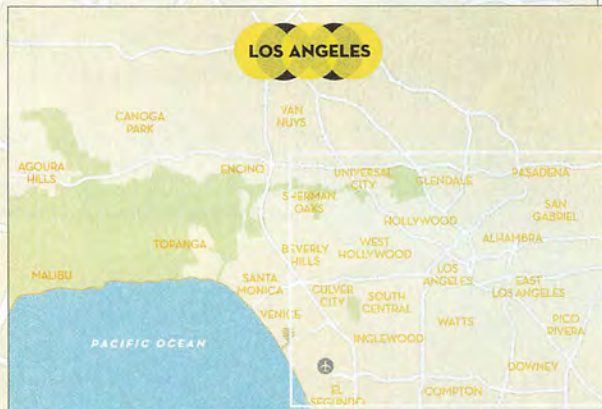


ILLUSTRATION BY HAISAM HUSSEIN

VEN IN HOUSTON, home to the deepest, dankest hip-hop, there's such a thing as too funky.

"Daaaaaaamn!" says Mike Jones, waving a hand in front of his face. "What the hell's that smell, y'all?"

Inside a small debris-strewn recording studio, a film crew is working in close quarters, under blazing lights, with no ventilation, on a swampy Gulf Coast evening. The smell isn't someone, it's everyone: pure ambient funk. But climate control is out of this shoot's budget.

"All right!" booms a linebacker-looking assistant director. "Rehearsal's up!"

Rapper Mike Jones, about to portray the rapper Mike Jones, must take a moment to get into character. But on a production like this, people wear a lot of hats. "Hold on," says the round-face Jones, picking up a can of Febreze. Pffft. A perimeter is deodorized, courtesy of aromatherapist Mike Jones. "Aight!"

"Quiet, please. ... Camera's ready? Quiet ... and ... action!"

American Dream, a feature-length film based on Jones's life, is the latest entry in a thriving, DVD-only film industry with an underground economy of its own. In this world, the "straight-to-video" epithet bears no residual Hollywood shame. Though hip-hop is known for conspicuous consumption, these productions operate on budgets closer to those of student films rather than

a Diddy video. Producer Greg Anderson will give *American Dream*'s price tag only as "under a mill," yet it will probably cost less than Jones's Rolls-Royce Phantom, parked near a trailer.

The bare-bones studio is in a strip mall off 59 South, in a storefront under the sign AMAL'S BAKERY HOME OF THE ORIGINAL "PITA BREAD." After Jones finishes rapping a verse from his 2005 hit "Still Tippin'"—this being the recording-of-the-hit scene—the AD yells "Cut" and everyone starts picking up equipment and hauling it down the sidewalk, through an alley and past an overflowing Dumpster, reassembling under amber streetlights to shoot a double homicide.

The victims will be Houston rappers A-1 and Kiatti, who play estranged friends of our hero, ambushed by a foxy assassin feigning car trouble. Kiatti is a bit shaky on the scene, which was recently cobbled together to aid continuity. "Oh, naw!" he says, when someone explains it. "And we trying to help her out? What's my motivation?!"

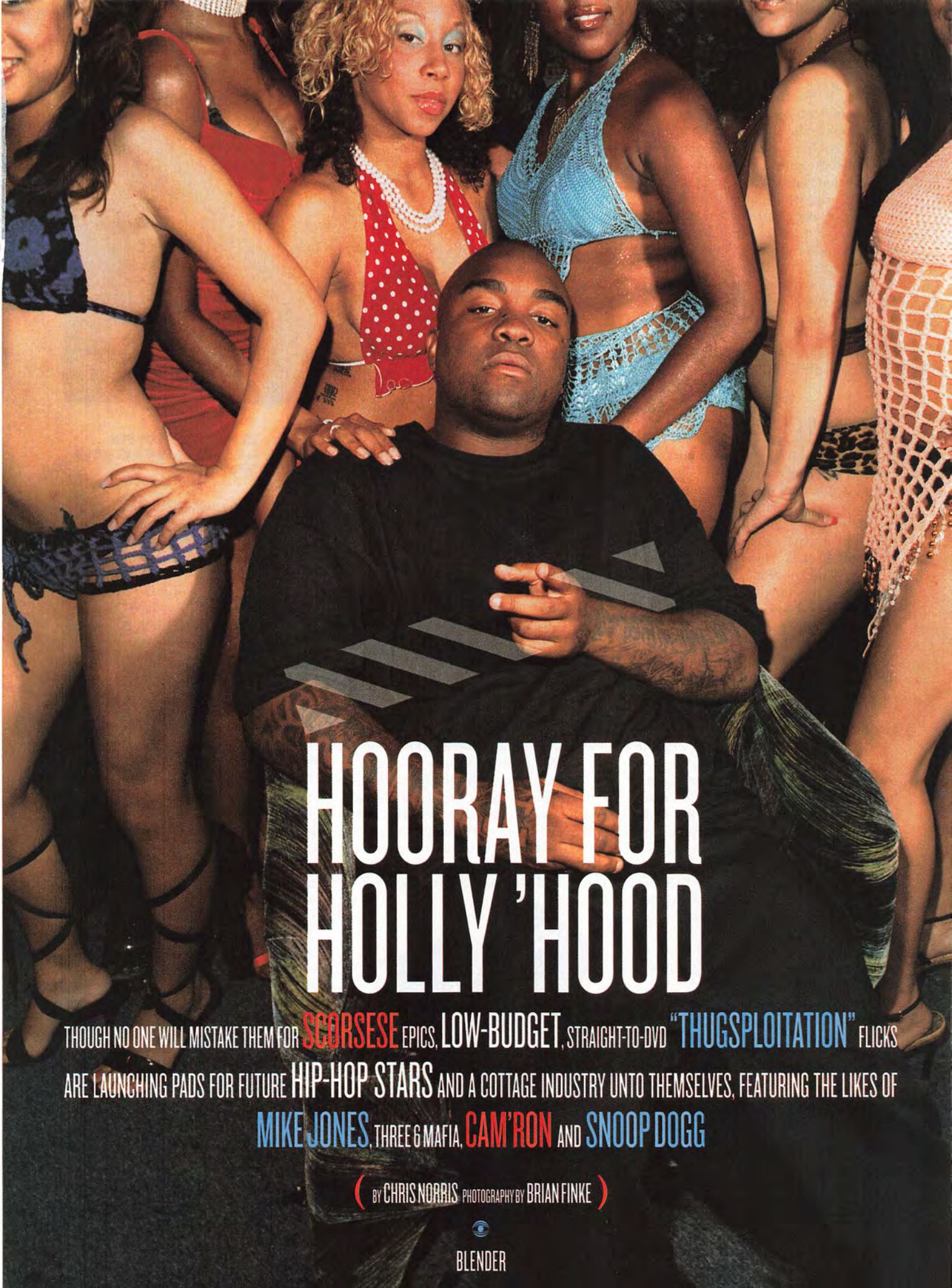
Director Derrick "D-Reck" Dixon comes over to demonstrate the actors' movements. "See, both of you hear the fake pop and just fall out," he says. "You'll be out of the shot anyway." This murder will have to rely on smoke and mirrors for effect. "On a bigger film, we might have squibs and blood packets," adds Anderson. "But we can do camera effects to hide the muzzle blast, do cutaways to imply action we can't film." >>

✱
READY, AIM, SHOOT: THE
CREW OF *AMERICAN
DREAM* ON LOCATION IN
HOUSTON, SEPTEMBER
11, 2006.

140

DECEMBER 2006

BLENDER



HOORAY FOR HOLLY 'HOOD

THOUGH NO ONE WILL MISTAKE THEM FOR **SCORSESE** EPICS, LOW-BUDGET, STRAIGHT-TO-DVD "THUGSPLOITATION" FLICKS
ARE LAUNCHING PADS FOR FUTURE HIP-HOP STARS AND A COTTAGE INDUSTRY UNTO THEMSELVES, FEATURING THE LIKES OF
MIKE JONES, THREE 6 MAFIA, **CAM'RON** AND **SNOOP DOGG**

(BY CHRIS NORRIS PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIAN FINKE)


BLENDER

After a quick rehearsal, Kiatti and A-1 look under the car hood while a catsuit-clad actress brandishing a fake Glock steps behind them. She cocks and fires soundlessly at Kiatti, cocking again to shoot A-1.

"You don't need to cock it again," Dixon says patiently. "It's an automatic."

They try again and blow a take because the microphone boom is in the shot. They try again and a car comes rolling down the street, blasting fat-bottomed hip-hop. Since this isn't a closed set, shots must be stolen, *Bowfinger*-style, between moments of traffic—mercifully light at this hour.

"All right, quiet please," yells the AD, as the car peels into the night. "OK, sound's up? Settle ... and ... action!"



HOUSTON, A.K.A. THE Third Coast, or Dirty Third, is merely the most recent mecca for a certain school of extreme indie-filmmaking—a genre that sprang from hip-hop, often stars gangsta rappers and might well be dubbed Thugsploitation. This Nouvelle Vague of urban cinema often attracts hip-hop's biggest names—Snoop Dogg, Cam'ron, Three 6 Mafia, Mike Jones and Ludacris, to mention but some—and in its energetic array of "hood" Harvey Weinsteins and gangsta Ed Woods resembles the early years of hip-hop itself.

"I look at this the same way rap fits into the music industry," Dixon says. "With R&B, you need a million dollars to make a record. With rap, you need only a couple hundred grand. These films are the same scenario."

Dixon's entrée into film jibes with the larger Thugsploitation paradigm. Born in Texas, D-Reck got his nickname from a formative car crash, then got into filmmaking just as accidentally. He briefly pursued a hip-hop career in Atlanta while earning an MBA, learning the business from all sides. In Houston, he started Wreckshop Records and turned to filmmaking as a way to get his artists national recognition. "Our ultimate mission was putting this music scene on the map," Dixon says.

He began with a documentary featuring local legend DJ Screw, along with the candy-tinted cars, cough-medicine cocktail "sizzurp" and other bits of local color, eventually turning it into the 70-minute film *Dirty Third*—now an underground classic. "It was real guerrilla," Dixon says. "A lot of improvisation. Like, 'OK, you're two guys selling dope. You get angry 'cause the money ain't right. Now shoot him.'"

They sold the DVD in record stores, often alongside its soundtrack—"20,000 units of the DVD and CD together," Dixon says. "Another 50,000 of the soundtrack alone"—and followed it with a sequel titled *Survival of the Illest*, starring Dixon, Scarface, E-40 and assorted H-Town rap-



HELLO, DOLLY: THE CAMERA'S READY TO ROLL (TOP), WHILE MIKE JONES GETS INTO CHARACTER (BOTTOM).

pers. Lion's Gate distributed that one, and now Dixon is primed to bring Houston's biggest star, Mike Jones, to the small screen.

This pugnacious self-promotion scheme is, in fact, an emerging business model, as even major film studios recognize DVDs as their main source of revenue. In the U.S. alone, DVD sales for 2005 totaled \$16.3 billion, with an additional \$6.4 billion from rentals. And as far as stigma goes, only 507

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Obviously, these films require certain deviations from the standard Hollywood rulebook. "If you don't have someone who could play a role, you just have them play themselves," Dixon says, sharing a technique crucial to many rapper-based narratives. "Write around them, turn people into fictionalized versions of themselves." Films also tend to stick to reliable tropes. "Ghetto *Godfather*, ghetto *Scarface*," Dixon says, smiling wanly. "You know, rise to the top selling crack. Strippers, guns, drugs." These are the grittier shadows to mainstream hip-hop flicks like *Beat Street*, *Boyz n the Hood* and *8 Mile*, unlikely to garner many thumbs-up from Ebert & Roeper.

But judging these films by traditional cinematic standards seems, as critic Henry Louis Gates said of black theater's "chitlin' circuit," a genre mistake: "like taste-testing chewing tobacco." These DVDs were originally driven by the great American business adage, "find a need and fill it"—the need being something to watch, possibly with the sound off, while you and your buddies get high. The resulting product differs from >>



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CHAMPS
SPORTS
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what most film critics would call a "good movie."

Take Master P's groundbreaking 1997 DVD *I'm Bout It*, which isn't bad in the predictable-plot, bad-acting, hacky-direction way. It's bad in the who's-he? what'd-he-say? what-the-hell's-going-on-here? way. Arguments cut to reaction shots from people clearly filmed at different times and locations. A beach love scene gets drowned out by a passing airplane. An extended *Scarface* sequence—hairnets, Pacino accents, power tools—plays less like an homage than a shot-by-shot parody without jokes.

But for all that, the film is more fun than 80 percent of what you'll see on premium cable. There does seem to be a narrative in there somewhere—something about drug dealers, a guy who has a beef with another guy, a romantic triangle—but the film is at its heart a documentary, with a voice-over constantly dropping bits of New Orleans ghetto detail like, "You see that dance there? They call it p-popping." It is a film about milieu, with real slang, real dances, real locations, a real funeral marching band and real emaciated crack whores. The actors appear in their own clothes, in their own cars, with their own music as soundtrack. With a few discrepancies, *I'm Bout It* fulfills all the strictures of Danish cinema's avant-garde manifesto Dogme 95.

"If you really show your community, that's the way you make a hit," Master P says. "You gotta use people from your hood." And as hip-hop continues to thrive nationwide,

people want to visit that hood, preferably from the safety of their living rooms.



AS IT HAPPENS, the story of hip-hop DVDs actually begins in VHS format—with that colossus of American cinema, N.W.A's

THUG MOTIVATION 101

REMEMBER THESE FIVE ESSENTIAL STORYTELLING TENETS AND YOU TOO CAN BECOME A THUGPLOITATION AUTEUR

1. TELL, DON'T SHOW

A handy shortcut for narrative, exposition and character development. "Any idiot can write voice-over narration to explain the thoughts of a character," says the screenwriting guru in *Adaptation*. Exactly.

See: *I'm Bout It*; *Hot Boyz*; *Still Bout It*

2. CREATE A MORAL IMPASSE

A can't-fail plot engine dating back to Homer: Hero must choose between good and bad, dawg and homey, baby-mama and boo, crack game and rap game.

See: *Hip-Hop Task Force*; *Hustletown Mobbin'*; *American Dream*

3. STAGE A VEHICULAR AMBUSH

What's a movie without a scene in which fools creep up on a mark and smoke him in his ride? Can begin, punctuate or end the film

and is guaranteed to grab the audience's attention. Bonus points if the mark is having sex.

See: *Choices: The Movie*; *Survival of the Illest*

4. THROW A CROOKED WHITE COP IN SOMEWHERE

Because nothing says "villain" like a cracker with a badge. Extra-effective if he turns out to be tight with a mob boss or, better yet, is played by Gary Busey.

See: *Hot Boyz*; *No Tomorrow*

5. WHEN IN DOUBT, CUT TO A STRIP CLUB

A surefire way out of narrative dead-ends, plot holes and lulls. Note: NC-17 will keep you out of Wal-Mart, so go easy on the full-frontal nudity.

See: *Every single one of these movies ever made C.N.*



✱ THE PA'S ON *AMERICAN DREAM* HAVE NOWHERE TO CLIP THEIR WALKIE-TALKIES.

Efil4zaggin: The Only Home Video. "That's what really set it off," says Jeff Clanagan, formerly of No Limit Films, currently heading Codeblack Entertainment. "N.W.A was a huge act at the time, one of the biggest in America, and there was no outlet like reality TV to show fans their lifestyle."

Featuring a 1990 documentary following Dre, Cube and the gang as they barbecued, spun records and hosted a wet-'n'-wild booty-thon, the videotape was available solely in record stores and was rap's first independently sold piece of movie merchandise.

That torch wasn't fully raised again until 1997, when the multiplatinum Master P, frustrated with his inability to break into Hollywood, wrote, produced, directed and starred in *I'm Bout It*—releasing it only on DVD and retailing it at outlets like Tower, HMV and Best Buy. The film (whose opening credits bill it as "banned in theaters") created enough of a buzz to get his follow-up cell-phone caper, *I Got the Hook-Up*, theatrical distribution by Miramax. But even after that, No Limit decided to stick with straight-to-DVD.

"The urban niche really hadn't been served by anyone," Clanagan says. "Major studios produce only three or four urban movies a year, yet there's this huge audience hungry for that kind of content. These DVD movies are an economic necessity, in a way, because Hollywood still isn't good at reaching urban audiences."

It was No Limit that first began serving the niche, putting out the Master P-directed gangsta tale *Hot Boyz* in 1999, then following it with *No Tomorrow* (both >>

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starring that blond, eyebrowless enigma, Gary Busey). The label then helped launch new signee Snoop Dogg's DVD sub-oeuvre, which includes *The Wrecking Crew* (with Ice-T), *Urban Menace* (with Fat Joe), *The Eastsidaz* (with Xzibit) and *Crime Partners* (whose financing by drug kingpin Kenneth "Supreme" McGriff resulted in coproducer Irv Gotti being charged with money laundering).

And after P, the deluge: urban DVD films starring everyone from LL Cool J to Damon Dash to Funkmaster Flex to Cam'ron to Beanie Sigel—shot fast, made cheaply and without much sweating over quality control. "Not everything we do is a cinematic gem," admits Doug Schwab, head of Maverick Entertainment, which has released over 500 urban DVDs since starting in 1997, in genres including urban drama, urban comedy, urban family and, yes, urban Western. (*Gang of Roses*! Starring Lil' Kim as "Chastity"! And Bobby Brown

"OUR AUDIENCE MIGHT HAVE WARRANTS ON THEM, CAN'T GET OUT TO THE MOVIES. THEY'D RATHER SIT AT HOME, WATCH A MOVIE AND SMOKE SOMETHING."

DJ PAUL, THREE 6 MAFIA

as ... "Left Eye Watkins"! In fact, half the titles read like *Mad-TV* gags: *My Big Phat Hip-Hop Family*; *Treasure N Tha Hood*; *When Thugs Cry*; *I Accidentally Dined Your Son*. Go ahead and laugh, says Schwab. "We let independent directors be seen and blow up to the next level."

Yet some find this level just fine. Even with the clout they got from winning an Oscar for *Hustle & Flow*, Three 6 Mafia plan to release their next two films straight to DVD. "Our audience is street niggas," DJ Paul says. "They might have warrants on them, can't be getting out to the movies. They'd rather sit at the house, watch a movie and smoke something. Plus, you can have 15, 20 niggas up in the room rather than everybody paying \$10 each." And any synergy pimp can smell the money in a Netflix nation. "That's why I started Hollywood Cinema!" agrees Master P, now primarily a moviemaker who plans to produce 100 films this year. "There's so much drama in going to the movies. Watch it at home. Talk as loud as you want."

But for a true glimpse into Thugsploitation's future, we must, as with so many things, look to Snoop. "The smart move is to have a DVD come out less than a year after your record," says Constance Schwartz, Snoop's manager. "You put out a real movie with an actual story line but use it to give new life to the album." Next stop: animation. "That's what will support the new album—an animated DVD that comes out six months after the album."

Like hip-hop itself, the urban-DVD genre isn't the scrappy underdog it used to be—which is clearly a mixed blessing. Three decades on, many of the once-derided Blaxploitation films of the early '70s—*Shaft*, *Superfly*—have become revered cultural landmarks. And they did so largely because of the conditions under which they were made. Michael Campus directed a film, *The Mack*, that laid groundwork not only for hip-hop DVDs but hip-hop itself—shooting it in Oakland in 1972 in the middle of a gang war between

the Black Panthers and the Ward Brothers. The resulting movie influenced everyone from Tarantino to Snoop Dogg to Jay-Z and enjoyed a huge resurgence on its DVD reissue in 2002.

And as urban DVDs get "better"—real money, real stunts, real C-list actors—they also get a lot less fun. With its shoestring budget and gritty Memphis locale, Three 6 Mafia's *Choices: The Movie* achieved a cool distinctive feel: a grainy '70s art vibe mixed with '80s-slasher-film synthesizers and claustrophobic night-shot scenes. Many of the recent, bigger-time urban DVDs, on the other hand, look like most "high-octane" action flicks on Cinemax at 3 A.M.: shoot-'em-ups, police-car pile-ups, C. Thomas Howell. When amateur brio becomes hack professionalism, it's hard to call that progress.

Wrapping its two-week shoot, *American Dream* looks to fall somewhere between the two, with Warner Bros. distribution, a seasoned crew and a cast including Clifton Powell, Tamala Jones and Hassan Johnson, from HBO's *The Wire*. At 2 A.M., the star of the film rolls into another strip-mall parking lot to shoot what will be the first scene in the movie: the successful Mike Jones cruising past fans, pausing to reflect on *Back When They Didn't Want Him* (now that he's hot, they all up on him).

The only unsettled issue is that right now, Mike is wearing a white XXXXL T-shirt and tan-plaid golf shorts, which wardrobe is trying to convince him to upgrade. "Think about it," says Mr. Wardrobe. "This is after you made it. They don't want to see you in a white T-shirt and golf shorts."

"OK," Jones concedes, turning to Wardrobe. "Uh ... Lemme get a ... black tee." Jones looks around him blankly as the crew cracks up. "Why y'all laughin'?"

Finally, Jones agrees to don his chain, an item that may require a new word besides *bling*. Something with more syllables, like, "Bleeaaaaunnnnggg." Gigantic, covered in diamonds, with a Frisbee-size medallion bearing the name of his clique, ICE AGE, the piece costs, Jones says, \$30 grand for the pendant, 20 for the chain.

Jones is, in other words, wearing the budget for at least two Thugsploitation films around his neck. But in this game, you have to set priorities.

"OK, quiet please!" calls the AD. "Settle ... and ... action!" [BLENDER]



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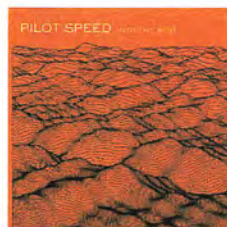
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"This is my secret workout spot. They have a basketball court that opens up at eight on Sunday mornings, and they have the Santa Monica stairs there; I run up the football stadium stairs—and you got to be like Rocky if you are gonna make it up."

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"If you want to get the classic Dickies suits, the classic khaki that N.W.A. had, you got to hit the Slauson Swap Meet. The price is right, but one thing you gotta watch out for is it's a heavily Crip-infested neighborhood, so you can't have no red on. I can't go over there too much. The Compton Swap Meet on Long Beach Boulevard is much safer for me personally."

LOS ANGELES

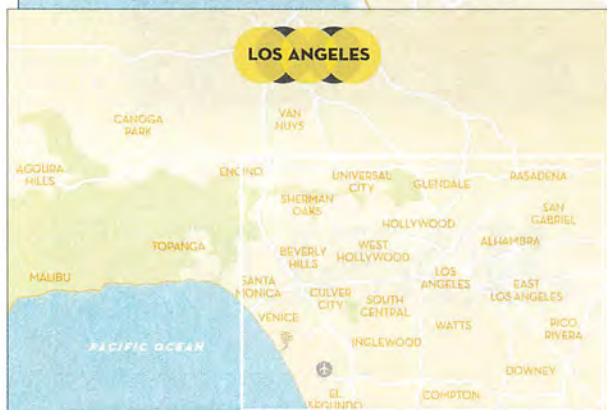
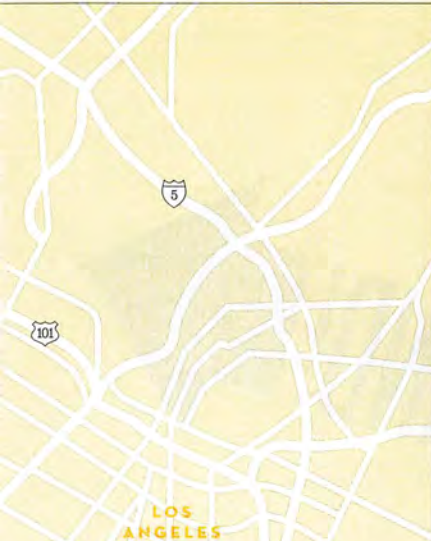


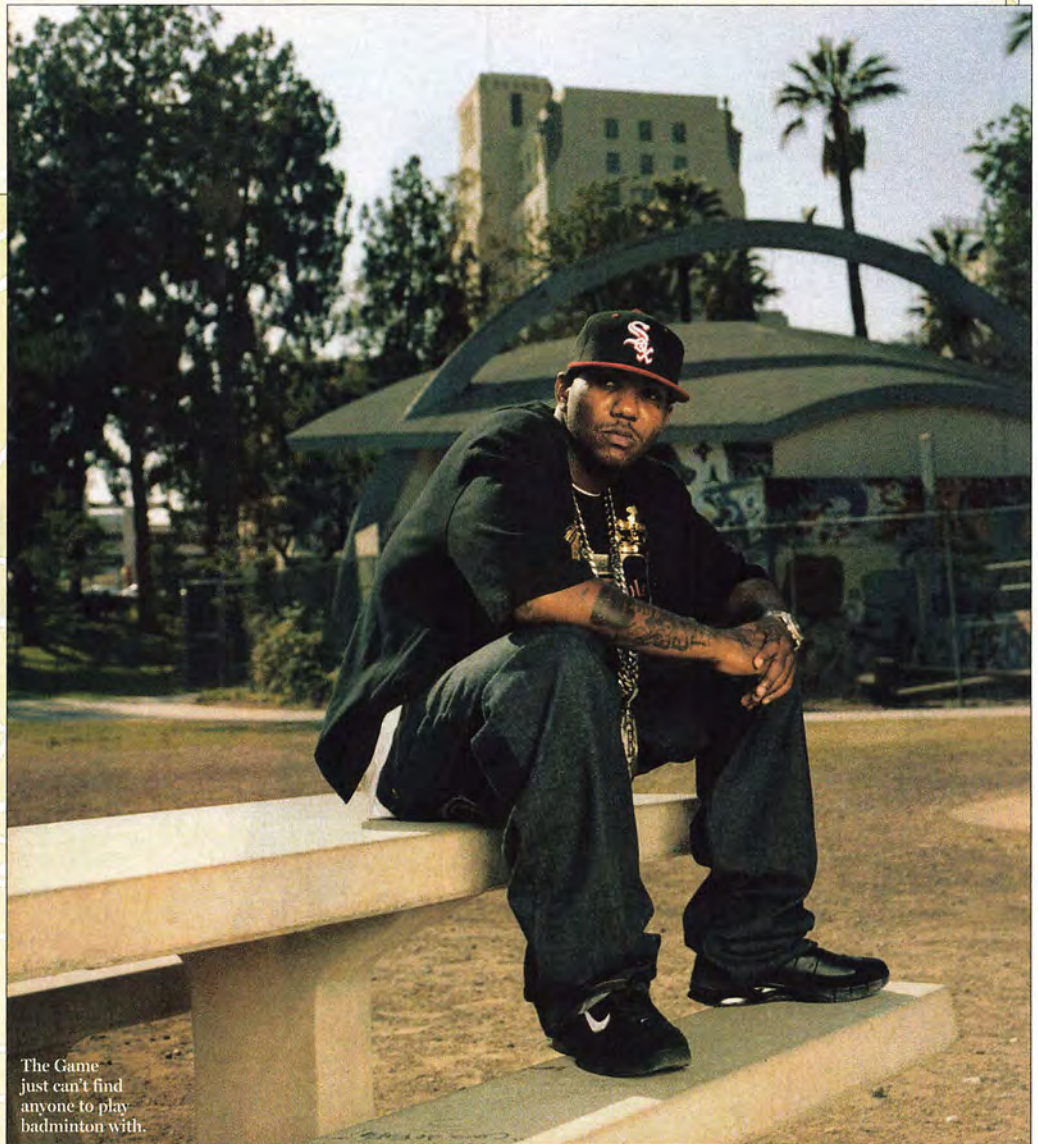
ILLUSTRATION BY HAISAM HUSSEIN



NICKERSON GARDENS

WATTS

"When the sun goes down and I gotta unwind with the homies I go over to Nickerson Projects at Central and Imperial Highway. I go there at night because it's a little more calm and collected. But beware of the Bounty Hunter Bloods if you're not affiliated with them like I am. They called that place the 'City of God' long before the movie."



The Game just can't find anyone to play badminton with.



S. ALAMEDA ST.

CEDAR BLOCK PIRU

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"After your tattoo, you can come by my hood at Cedar and Wilmington—that's where I come from. We're a small hood, but we had the shit locked up for most of the '80s and '90s. We still have a lot of power on the west side of the city. If you're ever in that hood, mention Dibo, Whiteboy, King Frogg Dogg or Big Dan. Those are my big homies. I'm a little homey by comparison. They can get you where I can't go. But like I say, you better be affiliated."

COMPTON COURTHOUSE

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"This was the place where I first heard N.W.A. A relative was getting out of jail when I was younger. Me and my mom was getting out of the car and this other car pulled up, an '87 Cutlass Supreme, blue with gold trim and whitewall Pirelli tires, and it was *booming*. I had never heard no shit like that in my life! 'Straight out of Compton, motherfucker!' I never heard nobody cussing like that on a record—all I'd heard was 'Self Destruction,' things like that."

Stuff

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← I'M WITH

THE BAND! →

IN THE SPAN OF A FEW DIZZYING WEEKS, TORONTO LINE COOK TURNED ROCK STAR: SUPERNOVA WINNER **LUKAS ROSSI** HAS GONE FROM WORKING ALONGSIDE HOOTERS GIRLS TO MAKING RECORDS FOR THEM

(BY RJ SMITH PHOTOGRAPHY BY KENNETH CAPPELLO)



Lukas hails Satan, CBS-funded focus group.

HE CRUNCHY METAL blasting through the studio is messing with Lukas Rossi's head. Forty-eight hours after winning the competition on the reality-TV show *Rock Star: Supernova*, Rossi is in a studio in L.A.'s trendy Silver Lake neighborhood, listening to tracks he'll sing on with his brand-new bandmates: Tommy Lee, who also plays drums with Mötley Crüe; ex-Metallica bassist Jason Newsted; and guitarist Gilby Clarke, formerly of Guns N' Roses.

"It sounds fuckin' big, man! There's so much room," Rossi raves.

On TV he was a former Toronto restaurant worker with a bottomless faith in his own talent. But now that faith is getting put to the test. He looks the part, he's showing he belongs. And then Rossi asks the guy working the soundboard if it would be at all possible to duplicate a cool vocal effect they used the other day. The techie shoots him a look that screams: *Duh*.

"You have to excuse me," the 29-year-old Rossi says quickly. "I'm just so used to working with really shitty producers."

"Those days are over," says Clarke, smiling. "All you've got to do now is ask."

You can take the line cook out of Hooters, but it will probably take a few months to extract all the Hooters out of Rossi. He's cutting vocals for his band's CD, out in November. He's preparing for a 27-city tour that opens New Year's Eve in Las Vegas. He's been in a pair of popular Toronto bands, but that was the frying pan and this is the fire.

His new coworkers have stood onstage beside James Hetfield, beside Vince Neil, beside *Axl fuckin' Rose*. They've sold tens of millions of records, played packed enormodomes across six continents, indulged in every hoary cliché from the rock & roll buffet and gone back for seconds. In conversation, they each make a point of saying how much they respect Rossi and how he's going to contribute to the success of *Rock Star Supernova* (the band's gangly name after a lawsuit from a preexisting group named Supernova). That remains to be seen; he'll contribute a few songs to the new CD, but most of it was recorded by his leather-pantsed elders before Rossi was even crowned. In truth, they barely know Lukas, and with Lee now on tour with Mötley Crüe, they aren't going to bond much until they hit the road themselves.

It's a situation likely to keep any front-



One reason Rossi won *Rock Star*: his stage presence. Another: his ability to levitate.

man jumping. On the one hand, as Clarke notes, they are all in their 40s, and Rossi isn't even 30. "He's more in touch with our audience than we are," Clarke explains. So respect must be paid. But at the same time, Rossi comes to Hollywood with no place to

In person, though, he's cryptic, somewhat incommunicative. He's got some Thom Yorke space boy in him, and a lot of Bowie-esque androgyny.

"That's what true artists are—hard to figure out," Newsted says. "Look at John Frusciante or Kirk Hammett. Those kind of people are a bit weird, man. It's not uppity, stuck-up or standoffish—they're just different. We say, 'Lukas ain't right, and we like that!'"

Whatever he's like right now, a few months on the road with the big boys is going to rewrite Rossi's genetic code. If he ain't right today, just you wait. He's walking a fine line. He might help revive his bandmates' somewhat dormant careers. Or he may end up being their bitch: *Go out there and make us some more money, and bring us some fresh groupies while you're at it*. The situation reminds Clarke of when he hooked up with Guns N' Roses after Izzy Stradlin departed. He found himself partying all night with band members at the Plaza Hotel and realized by sunrise he couldn't pay the bill.

It might sound funny, but to Rossi it sounds like a challenge. Sitting on a studio couch, waiting for a song he's written to get turned into a hit record, he ponders his victory. "We were all just meant to be in a band together," he muses. "And we're >>

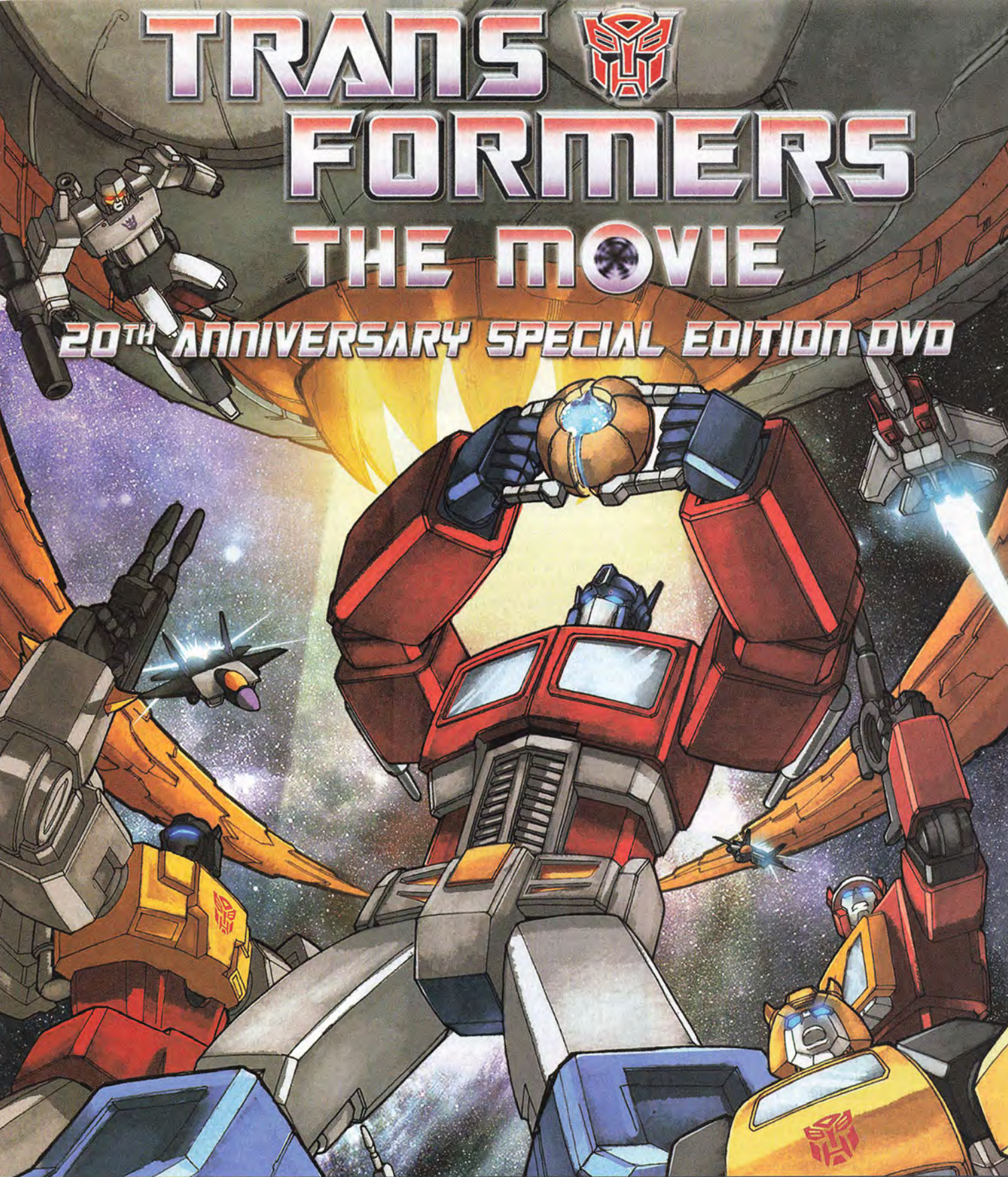


stay and no car—the guy doesn't even have a driver's license.

That said, there are worse things than hitting the gas pedal without a license. Rossi won the votes of millions of viewers and those who mattered most—the hard-rock vets who were judges on *Rock Star*—with a stage swagger that said, "I own this place." Lee sees an almost Iggy Pop-level intensity in the way Rossi works an audience. Rossi says he went into a zone on *Rock Star* and couldn't remember what he'd done onstage until he watched the playback.

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WHERE IS HE NOW?

CATCHING UP WITH J.D. FORTUNE, WINNER OF *ROCK STAR: INXS*

★ Eighteen months ago, J.D. Fortune's home was a beat-up Nissan Sentra. The 33-year-old Ontario native had lost everything investing in a buddy's hemp-themed coffee shop; now he was reduced to subsidizing his rock & roll fantasies with whatever odd jobs he could find, from kitchen scrubber to gravel layer to—maybe worst of all—Elvis impersonator. “Dude,” Fortune says, “you have no idea how hard it is to get laid wearing a gold-lamé jacket.”

But then he won *Rock Star: INXS*. Today, phoning from a tour stop in New Zealand exactly one year later, Fortune has the incredulous, slightly mystified air of an everydude who's living his dream, equally thrilled by the 68,000 fans they played to in Jakarta and the German girl who mailed him her pubic hair. (“It came in a little nickel bag—I thought it was hash!”)

But he also knows it could end any minute—a fact that had been underscored two days earlier, when the band was dropped by its U.S. label. “There’s no insurance policy for guys like me,” Fortune admits. “I’m the juice box of the music industry—as soon as they’re finished with me, they throw me out. Honestly, I worry about it every second.” *Josh Eells*

about to drop a record that’s the freshest, coolest stuff I’ve ever heard.”

THESE ARE TOUGH times for your average rock god. The major outlet for exposure—radio—is losing listeners to the Web and satellite, and anyway, the leading radio format these days is country. It took the capitalist genius of Mark Burnett to see how TV could give immediate global exposure to the rock band of his choosing.

Burnett, the British-born television producer who brought *Survivor* to America, was already established as the big papa of reality TV. He knew how to craft a hit: with *Rock Star*, he tried his hand at crafting hit-makers. Last year, *Rock Star* resuscitated the career of INXS by airing the audition for a replacement for their singer, the late Michael Hutchence. The show was a solid-enough success, but what struck Burnett

IN THE DAYS AFTER HE WON, ROSSI HOUSE-SAT FOR LEE WHILE THE DRUMMER TOURED WITH THE CRÜE. HE COULDN'T FIGURE OUT HOW TO WORK THE WIDE-SCREEN TV.

was how many people turned out for the subsequent INXS tour. These folks were as likely to be new fans of the program as old fans of the band.

“Tommy, Gilby and Jason will always draw their core fans,” says Burnett of *Rock Star* Supernova. “But TV is a really smart way for them to engage a new audience and make them fans more quickly.”

Consoling runner-up Dilana Robichaux.



A conceit of the show involved the prospects of grizzled Sunset Strip war vets being assigned a fresh-faced recruit. Now that Rossi's reporting for duty, he's bound to get a little hazing. “He's going from being broke as fuck to being catapulted right into the limelight,” Lee says. “I know what that feels like. I hope he adapts—some don't and they get this dreaded disease called LSD: Lead Singer Disease. They turn into fucking jerk-offs. I've seen it happen to a few people. I hope he hangs on.”

This year's series started with some 25,000 applicants auditioning in 22 cities on six continents. Yet soon after the cameras started rolling on the 15 finalists, it became obvious to Gilby, Tommy, Jason and eerily up-to-the-job host Dave Navarro (think *Love Boat*'s Captain Stubing with a chest waxing) that this was a two-person race, between Rossi and Dilana Robichaux, a South African living in Houston. They were neck and neck, Canada Dry vs. Cajun hippie chick. Dilana stumbled badly midseason, when she badmouthed Lukas at a mock press conference, but roared back with a killing cover of the Cranberries' “Zombie.”

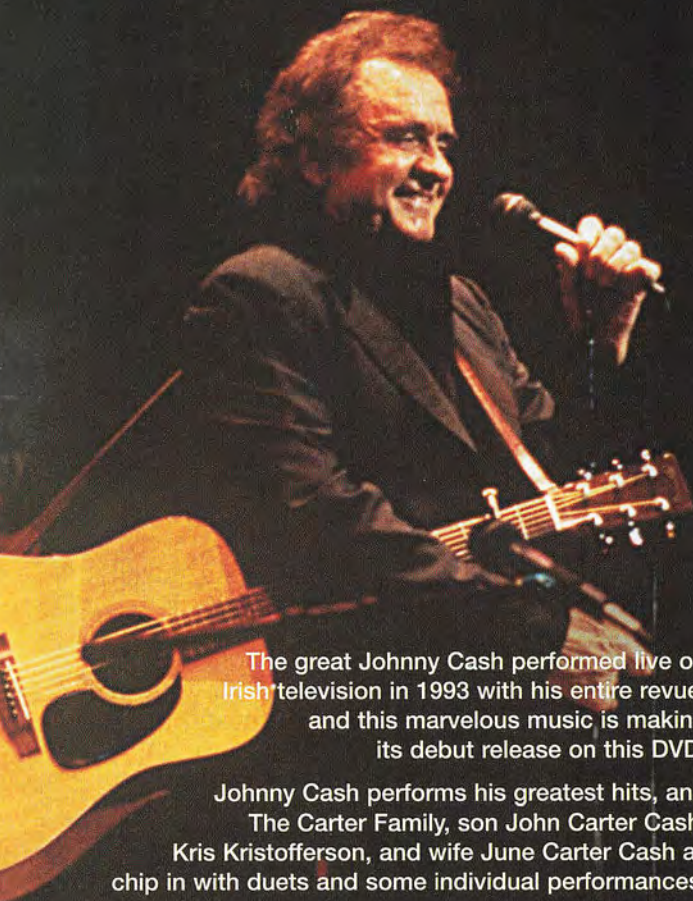
When he stood side by side with Robichaux on the final show, waiting as the judges milked the suspense, an unfamiliar look—could it have been uncertainty?—crossed Rossi's face. “That moment was the only time during the whole audition when I'd been nervous,” he admitted later. “It could have gone either way.”

In the end, it may have come down to the way Rossi held the stage, or his cover of “Let's Spend the Night Together.” Or maybe it had something to do with the trepidation a bunch of old dudes had about taking a woman on the road.

Tommy Lee opines freely. Maybe a little too freely. “Could you imagine a lead singer with the dreaded lead-singer disease and a girl who's on the rag?” he says. “Can you imagine?! I wonder which one's worse. That would be good, an egotistical female singer who's having a that-time-of-the- >>

CASH

in Ireland



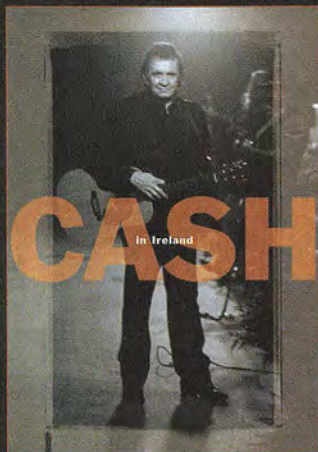
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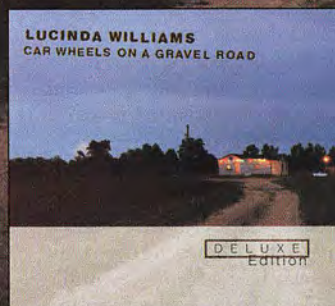
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month-thing—hah, that would be some fireworks. A reality show you could film only once a month.”

A STRETCH HUMMER whips by as Rossi stands on the sunbaked sidewalk in front of his L.A. hotel. “Hey, Lukas, no more chicken wingever!” somebody shouts out a window. A motorcyclist all but falls off his bike when he sees the newborn star, recovering in time to request a picture.

We walk along Sunset Boulevard to a faux cowboy bar and pull up at a sidewalk table. Rossi talks about a life that’s way behind him now. “It hasn’t hit me yet. I don’t want it to hit me,” he says.

Rossi was born in Toronto and bounced back and forth between divorced parents. His brother Jonas remembers Lukas as a sensitive kid who came alive through music. “Where other kids were running off to skating rinks and being Canadians, we were getting together with music,” says Jonas Marcocchio. “Our good times were when we could sit in my room and I could throw on a record.”

“Really loud!” Lukas adds. “It used to terrify me. I’d be banging on Jonas’s door, and then I’d start listening through the door.” He starts doing a pretty good Billy Idol groan: “In the midnight hour...

“Next thing you know, it’d be him and me jumping on the bed, flinging our arms around. That’s where we found a lot of our solitude and happiness.”

The solitude came easier than the happiness. Rossi dropped out of high school and couch-surfed, ending up in Toronto’s West End, a gang-infested vista. “I really had to fight for myself. It wasn’t the easiest life, to be honest. I was raised on street life, not book smarts.” He took assorted construction jobs, and he’s become the most famous alum of a certain restaurant chain better known for its female employees.

He and his brother barely saw each other after the family dragged Jonas to the States. In the days after Lukas won the competition, he phoned Jonas up and asked him if he’d come to Hollywood and be his personal manager. Lukas hasn’t spoken to his parents in years. The song he wrote and played on *Rock Star*, “Headspin,” is about his relationship with his mother: “Did I ever mean something to you?”

Rossi’s a walking mixed metaphor: an image-conscious gutter bird. There’s a side of him that radiates street-punk cred—it’s in the way he chain smokes unfiltered, the way he talks ... heck, it’s in the way he smells.

But there’s also something unnervingly professional about him. This is a showman in the modern-Ontario tradition of Avril Lavigne, Hayden Christensen, Sum 41 and



Enter frontman, clockwise from top: with his new bandmates and host Brooke Burke; with his imaginary rhythm guitarist, Buzz; learning what a “mixing board” is from Gilby Clarke.

even J.D. Fortune, his fellow Torontonian who won *Rock Star* in 2005. They all seem to have come out of some secret laboratory in the north country dedicated to sanding off the rough edges from promising talent and grooming them for keeping cool under the brightest lights.

All that swagger and confidence come together in his improbable look: leather trench coat, floppy hat, lip gloss and big sunglasses, capped by a shock of white swirling through his Dairy Queen do. He’s like Cruella de Vil bred with Billie Joe Armstrong. He never breaks character. “I

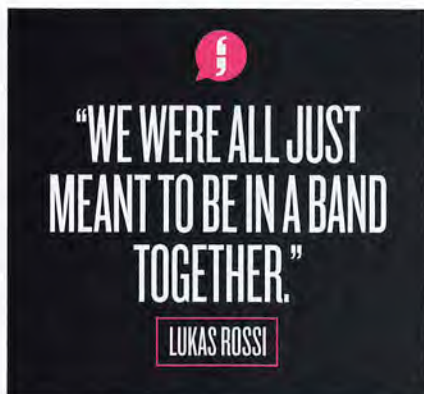
ten. Ask who his favorite songwriters are and he’ll say he doesn’t really listen to others because he doesn’t want their work influencing his own. Even when he was a teen, worshipping the Smashing Pumpkins and the Cult, he refused to put their pictures up on his bedroom wall: As he told a journalist, “I wanted to be the one on the poster!”

So now the posters are being printed. Now he’s going to be on bedroom walls. It’s got to be a huge change for a West End boy. He’s worked hard to get where he is; he’ll have to work even harder to make it pay off. Rossi may be the frontman, the only member of Rock Star Supernova that the world has voted for, but he’s hardly getting an even share of the Supernova booty. “All the contestants were forced to sign entry-level contracts,” explains Tommy Lee. “We’ve all gone through it, man. There are some dues you gotta pay, it’s just part of the drill.”

In the days after Rossi won, he house-sat for Lee while the drummer went out with the Crüe. (He couldn’t figure out how to operate the wide-screen TV.) He’s gone to some Hollywood parties, but the biggest star he’s been able to identify so far is Audioslave’s Tom Morello. Most of the time he’s been holed up in the studio and his hotel room, learning his parts and what’s expected of him.

“I’m fortunate to be where I’m at,” he says, sipping iced tea along Sunset Boulevard. A homeless man comes over and asks if anyone’s ever told Lukas he looks like Joey Ramone. Lukas busts a wide smile and signs another autograph.

“We’re a band now,” he says proudly. “We’re complete. And we’re going to keep writing music until the cows come home. Somebody asked me what will happen after the record comes out. It’s obvious: make another record.” [BLENDER]



was told by the makeup people, ‘Maybe you should lighten up on the eyeliner and glitter,’ and I was like, hell no, dude!” Rossi says. Tommy Lee even staged a sneak camera attack on him at the contestants’ mansion one afternoon, hoping to catch him in cutoffs and flip-flops, but no dice. Even in 85-degree weather it was black leather and gloves by the pool.

His confidence runs bone deep. Ask him about any downside of doing the TV show and he’ll tell you he hated singing the covers. He only wants to play songs he’s writ-

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Sweepstakes winner Matt Lehman (third from right) with The Rasmus



Lauri Ylönen during The Rasmus' performance



A shot of guests after a shot of SoCo

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY KENNETH CAPPELLO

When it comes to the holidays, some people can be real killjoys—making lists, checking them twice, trying to find out who's naughty or nice. But not us! Here at *Blender* HQ, we think everybody deserves presents...even the trouble-making British rockers **DIRTY PRETTY THINGS**. Join the band as they present this year's hottest stocking stuffers, and remember: No coal allowed!

KEGGER AT RIP TAYLOR'S PLACE!
(DPT Left to right: Carl Barat,
Didz Hammond, Anthony
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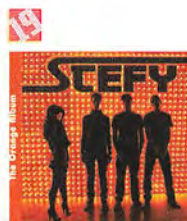


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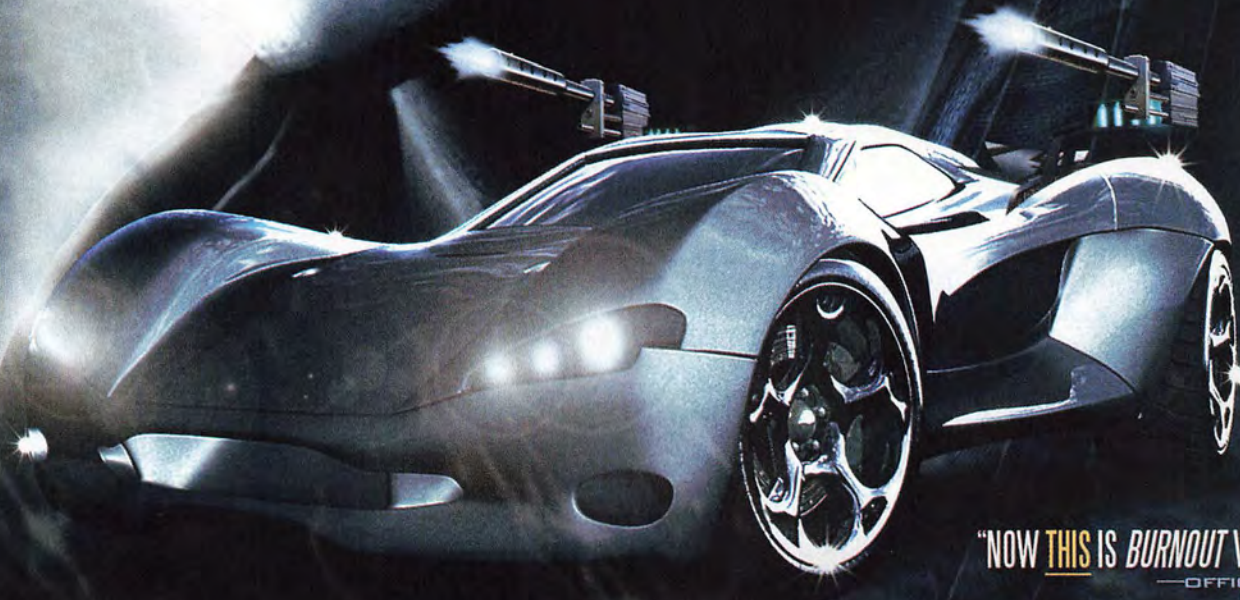
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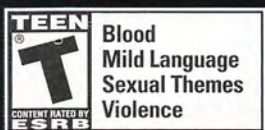


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THE BEATLES

1960s songs get remixed for a Vegas circus show. Sounds awful! But it's a triumph of renewal.



BRAND NEW

On this emo group's fantastic third album, God is the ultimate negligent parent.



THE WHO

That whole "hope I die before I get old" thing? This is what they were afraid of.



THE GUIDE

THEY MAKE 'EM. WE REVIEW 'EM

OLD SOUL

YOUNG CAT SCORES THE BEST SOUL ALBUM IN YEARS BY MIXING SMOOTH PIANO WITH DIRTY SEX

JOHN LEGEND

ONCE AGAIN ★★★★★

G.O.O.D./COLUMBIA/SONY URBAN MUSIC

WHAT A SMOOTHIE John Legend seems to be. With his grainy, sincere voice and romantic old-soul-music samples, this 27-year-old Ivy League graduate sounds like the last modest guy left among the preening, callous playas of R&B. But behind that self-effacing charm, Legend has a grand ambition. And at least a touch of kink, too.

His second album is a tour de force of deceptive understatement, perfect for a tryst by candlelight. It doesn't have an intro, guest rappers, boomin'



"The name's Legend. John Legend."

beats, brand names, thugging, shout-outs or jolts. Instead, it has melodies, live instruments, come-ons, regrets, tenderness and a mission: *Once Again* sets out to rebuild the dramatic storytelling and redemptive power of soul music on a hip-hop foundation.

For more than a decade, that's been the dream and promise of neosoul, nearly fulfilled on occasion by Alicia Keys, Erykah Badu or D'Angelo. But neosoul never figured out whether to emulate the hallowed '60s and '70s or to reprogram them with modern tools, and Legend doesn't choose sides. He simply brings the two strategies closer than ever. Working with samples and loops, he makes them breathe; working with a studio band, he doesn't pretend to be vintage.

Legend's 2004 debut, *Get Lifted*, climbed into the Top 10 and won three Grammys with some profanity-slugging help from rappers, including Snoop Dogg. It was a good start, but at times he just seemed bland. The most memorable song was "Ordinary People," a plea for forgiveness featuring Legend alone at the piano. Hip-hop egomania would be equally out of place in his new songs. He flirts, he implores, he prays, he leers, he agonizes over sins and he flirts some more, but he doesn't boast. Like Marvin Gaye, he believes in sexual healing. Twice, he begs women for a second chance by suggesting they stop arguing and start making out.

Earnest as he sounds, Legend has an appetite for sin; often, he struggles with temptation and fails. The album's two central songs—"Again" and "Another Again"—are both about compulsive cheating. "Again" is a ballad wrapped in elegant piano filigree, as Legend sings with increasing agitation about an affair neither he nor his mistress can break off; when he sings, "I'm doing it again," his voice is desperate, not smug. In "Another Again,"

he's stuck in a similar situation: "I think we're gonna blow it and we know it/But she's naked again/We get wasted and I taste it." The track, produced by Legend's mentor Kanye West, uses an insistent, circling loop, piling on strings and horns for tension; it emulates the behavior pattern the singer can't break.

Legend bestows a Latin lilt on "P.D.A.," as he invites his girlfriend to have sex in public: on the fire escape, at a restaurant, in the park, at her mama's house. If the neighbors are voyeurs, even better: "Let's open the blinds, 'cause we really don't mind." And where he brags about his success, he does it within a horn-dog's lament: In "Stereo," he loses interest in a groupie until he sees her again in someone else's video, tangling lust, fame and media.

Even when he's more high-minded, like a good neosoul man, he stays supple and subtle; messages don't weigh him down. The most vulnerable-sounding song, "Show Me," turns out to be a challenge to the Almighty. Over a loping, Jimi Hendrix-style guitar lick, Legend uses his most liquid voice to croon, "Show me that you love me." But it's not a proposition; it's a prayer from a skeptical believer presumptuous enough to ask God to demonstrate some peace and mercy for once. Romance shades into politics in "Coming Home" as Legend makes himself a soldier at war, uncertain about who or why he's fighting, but mostly wondering if he can reunite with a girl he left behind.

At times, Legend can be too suave for his own good. He spends so much time beseeching that it would be a relief if, just once, he'd demand something; a hint of roughness would make his tenderness sound less automatic. But he's determined to make a point here: You end up a lot closer to someone when you whisper in her ear than when you get up in her face.

JOHN PARELES

DOWNLOAD: "Again," "Show Me," "P.D.A."

THE SCORE

★★★★★	CLASSIC
★★★★	GREAT
★★★	GOOD
★★	MEDIOCRE
★	FOUL

(+44)

WHEN YOUR HEART STOPS BEATING ★★★

INTERSCOPE

Two-thirds of blink-182 slap a frown-y face on familiar catchy pop punk

It's uncertain whether blink-182 are "on hiatus" or broken up, but it's clear why they had trouble growing up together: They have very different ideas about what growing up means. For Tom DeLonge, it means six-minute Angels & Airwaves songs about heartbreak and outer space. For Mark Hoppus (reteamed here with tattooed showboat drummer Travis Barker), it means something less "ambitious": blink-182 without the humor. Hoppus, who wields a clear, pleading baritone, is great with wistful hooks ("Lycanthrope," the title track), and he packs these urgent rockers with epic, despairing clichés—"I'm barely holding on," "My heart hangs from this noose"—saved by sheer earnestness. But when "Cliff Diving," shimmering with nostalgia for bygone summers, appears halfway through the brooding, it's like a sunbath—and proof that Hoppus shouldn't confuse maturity with spending all his time in the shadows.

JONAH WEINER

DOWNLOAD: "When Your Heart Stops Beating," "Cliff Diving"

...AND YOU WILL KNOW US BY THE TRAIL OF DEAD

SO DIVIDED ★★★

INTERSCOPE

Five arty Texans stagger to London, make a beautiful mess

When we last heard from the ferocious (and ferociously verbose) band ...And You Will Know Us by the Trail of Dead on last year's *Worlds Apart*, they seemed to be playing nice: hemming in their wilder instincts, basing songs around demonstrable hooks instead of arty freak-outs. It was unfortunate: They're at their best when they're a mess. Enter a satisfyingly sloppy fifth album, which staggers from a bloated, six-minute guitar eruption ("Naked Sun") to an austere cover of underground kingpins Guided by Voices ("Gold Heart Mountainop

TALES FROM THE STUDIO

JOHN LEGEND ON THE MAKING OF *ONCE AGAIN*

WHERE THE MAGIC HAPPENED

"A few studios in New York and L.A. Cheap-ones for writing, more expensive ones for recording. I did some work in Chung King, which is the first studio I ever went to in Manhattan—it's where Lauryn Hill was having auditions for her band back in 1998, when I tried out for keyboards. It was cool to be back there."

MOST FREQUENTLY ORDERED TAKE-OUT DISH

"Rotisserie chicken, barbecue chicken, any kind of chicken."

HOW OFTEN LEGEND GOT "LIFTED" IN THE STUDIO

"I can't do that when I'm singing. It hurts my throat, makes it all scratchy. That's a recreational pastime."

SONG HE'S MOST PROUD OF

"'Show Me.' It's a song asking God about what's going on in the world, saying the world is kinda fucked up right now and wondering why. A lot of my writing, even when I talk about romance, is about uncertainty and doubt."

ARTISTS HE SHAMELESSLY RIPS OFF

"The Doors, Jeff Buckley, Jimi Hendrix, Marvin Gaye, Sam Cooke, Stevie Wonder, the Beatles, Fiona Apple and a little bit of Sufjan Stevens."

THE HATERS WILL SAY

"'How's he gonna get on the radio making those kinds of songs?' And my answer is, I'm not trying to sound like the crap that's on the radio."



Legend: "Go go Gadget trench coat!"

Queen Directory") with room in between for some hungover regret ("I feel like I've wasted all this time!" Conrad Keely howls over a stately accordion squeeze on "Wasted State of Mind"). They even detour to dear old Blighty with the very Britpop "Eight Day Hell." Schizoid, yes, but surprisingly successful.

ANDY GREENWALD

DOWNLOAD: "Stand in Silence," "Eight Day Hell"

COLD WAR KIDS

ROBBERS & COWARDS ★★½

DOWNTOWN

Songs about loneliness and theft from pop's new Piano Men

**NEXT
BLOG
THING**

Their band name implies the Reagan era, but these scruffy Angelenos take inspiration from the 1970s:

the soused storytelling of Tom Waits, the blue-eyed soul of the Doobie Brothers. Heir to the throne of wailing, piano-playing white boys is head Kid Nathan Willett, owner of a truly remarkable voice—an edgy yowl that can slide effortlessly from soulful rasp into sensual falsetto. On ramshackle gems like "We Used

to Vacation" and "Hospital Beds," Willett uncorks it to narrate loose-limbed stories about hard-living, down-on-their-luck urbanites (some terminally ill, others teetering on the wagon) while his band clatters and stomps behind him. Other than the mawkish, near-minstrel-ish "Saint John," this is time travel at its best.

ANDY GREENWALD

DOWNLOAD: "Hang Me Up to Dry," "Hospital Beds"

KEVIN DEVINE

PUT YOUR GHOST TO REST ★★½

CAPITOL

After three indie records, Brooklyn songwriter, 26, surveys life in bars and other dark spots

He sings a bit like the guy in Bright Eyes, he's produced by the man who polished Elliott Smith and he drinks in the post-collegiate trenches of Smith Street, Brooklyn: Songwriter Kevin Devine didn't make establishing his own voice easy on himself. His favorite topic is chopping lines; his secret worry is biting lines. But it's nice that his surprise resolution is not to quit either pursuit. As the lyrics read, "This was a choice; this was →



...And You Will Know Us by the Trail of Dead: "This WALK sign takes forever!"

167 BLENDER

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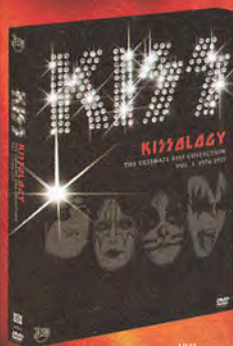
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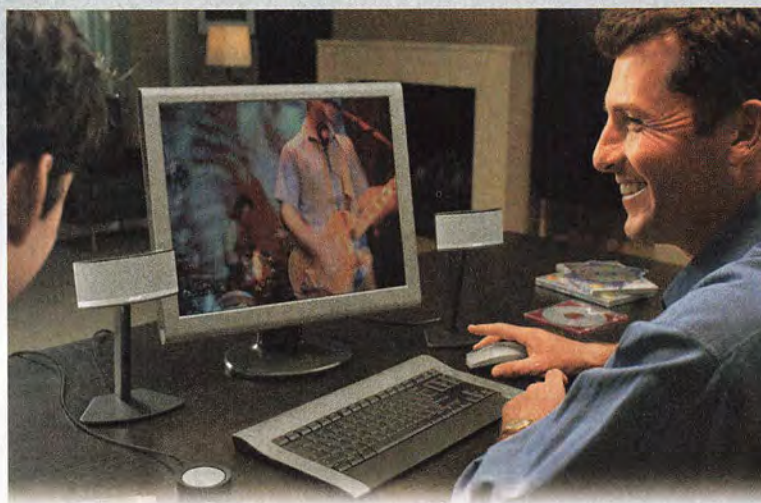
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VIVA LAS VEGAS!

THE BEATLES GAMBLE BY REMAKING THEIR SONGS—AND HIT THE JACKPOT

THE BEATLES

LOVE ★★★★★

APPLE/CAPITOL

A VEGAS SHOW based on the music of the Beatles? Acrobats dressed as walrus mince about, while a megamix—a megamix!—churns in the background? Slots-addled grannies clap out of time as another pile of cash swamps Paul McCartney's doormat? That was the suspicious response to the June 30 opening of *Love*, the \$150 million production from Cirque du Soleil. After the intraband soap opera and the duff solo albums, isn't it time the greatest rock band of all time did something, well, *cool*?

And yet, love or loathe the idea, the by-product of the Beatles' latest marketing



A FRESH, STARTLING LOOK AT ROCK'S MOST FAMILIAR SONGS.

wheeze is 80 minutes of music to amaze and delight. Masterminded by original producer George Martin and his son Giles, it's an impressionistic collage, a simultaneous feat of painstaking archaeology and refreshing sacrilege in which George Harrison's "Within You Without You" vocal is welded to the apocalyptic tabla undercarriage of "Tomorrow Never Knows," and "Julia," John Lennon's devastating ode to his dead mother, segues into a crushing punk-rock mix of his sinister psychmare "I Am the Walrus." If the Beatles took a lead from Danger Mouse, whose *Grey Album* brilliantly mixed the Fabs' White Album and Jay-Z's *Black Album*, the results are nearly as radical and easily as exciting. Importantly, what could have focused

on the glib McCartney levity of "Michelle" and "Lovely Rita" is instead a revealing dramatization of the Beatles' stunning emotional range, with the sinister fairground waltz of "Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite!" darkened further by the doom-metal guitar riff from "I Want You (She's So Heavy)" and a frangible, folksy deconstruction of "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" that exposes Harrison at his most engagingly raw. Beatles fetishists, furnished with a version of "Strawberry Fields Forever" that builds up from creaking demo into a sonic fantasia that rehabilitates sections from the unloved "Piggies," are as well served as the casual anthem-lover, rewarded with an overwhelming finale that gallops from "A Day in the Life's" final piano chord through "Hey Jude," a sped-up, drum-crazy "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club (Reprise)" and climaxes with the perhaps inevitable "All You Need Is Love." You can already hear the audience spill out into the Nevada night, belting out the coda.

Cleaned of '60s dust, every guitar lick, foot-tap and chair-squeak emerges in dazzling detail. A bit of charm has been lost—like David Bowie after he had his teeth fixed—but that's nitpicking. Now, "Revolution" sounds like 10,000 Chuck Berrys rocking the Grand Canyon and "I Want to Hold Your Hand"—bass and drums in your face like a rock & roll hammer—like it could have been recorded last week.

This is *Love*'s ultimate achievement. A band long broken up, and so majestic they've been relegated to history books, has been refashioned in a way that makes a fresh and startling presentation of songs as familiar as the Ten Commandments. The Beatles are a towering legend, but they're an even better band. Here's the proof.

TONY POWER

DOWNLOAD: "I Want to Hold Your Hand," "Within You Without You/Tomorrow Never Knows," "Strawberry Fields Forever"

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New Releases The Guide



Janet Jackson:
"Have I mentioned I have a flat stomach?"

never a mistake." The music has semicolons as well: It's writerly and measured, even Baroque, and at various times roots-y, rocking and numb in dollops. Still, pop hooks come from anywhere, and Devine owes a lot to his palpable striving: He's at his most romantic explaining why he can't quite capture a girl's essence singing into his portable four-track.

ERIC WEISBARD

DOWNLOAD: "Trouble"

THE HORRORS

THE HORRORS ★★

STOLEN TRANSMISSION

Their singer looks like Herman from *The Munsters*, minus the neck bolts

A high-concept garage-rock entity in a tradition stretching back to the Cramps, Misfits and beyond, the Horrors are five U.K. college-age kids in Victorian duds and ghoulish pancake makeup, with a sound heavily based on the needling "screeeee!" of Spider Webb's Vox Continental organ. A live sensation, thanks to all of the above, plus 6'7" singer Faris Rotter's stuck-pig screeching, they lack nothing except songs. In fact, of the five scrapped together here, only the 1

minute 41 seconds of "Sheena Is a Parasite" stays in the brain long enough to disturb or unsettle in the way the Horrors appear to intend. Yet there's cleverness at work in Rotter's goth-for-laugh lyrics, and there's also the promise of more fun afoot. Now they just have to write some music.

TONY POWER

DOWNLOAD: "Sheena Is a Parasite"

JANET JACKSON

20 Y.O. ★★½

VIRGIN

Gym-toned, scandal-shaken 40-year-old plays nice, breathes heavily

Almost three years after she made the Super Bowl memorable, Janet Jackson's not trying to be heavy. She's not trying to scream, take control, get nasty or catch a boycott. "There's something to be said for not saying anything," says the Zen-like diva in a spoken intro, gamelan plinking meditatively behind her. "I don't want to be serious—I want to have fun." Beware the control freak who announces she wants to have fun. What follows are five sex-me-up dance jams, after which her breathy voice coasts through a variety of aromatherapized moods and sultry slo-jams, asserting her inner calm, sexual fulfillment and divine right to be back atop the charts. Her boyfriend Jermaine Dupri plays witty, '80s-referencing production games, crafting tricked-out R&B settings that nearly pull off this consensus-building coup, though it's hard to catch much buzz off fun that sounds so much like work.

CHRIS NORRIS

DOWNLOAD: "This Body," "Call On Me"



Joanna Newsom: "I'm a fairy-princess unicorn!"

THE CD WE'RE TOTALLY GAY FOR

JOANNA NEWSOM

YS ★★★★★

DRAG CITY

Harp-plucking indie oddball paints her masterpiece

On her sophomore outing, the 24-year-old neofolk darling Joanna Newsom stretches her talents incredibly far and still manages to grab the golden ring. The five songs on *Ys* are utterly singular: long and loopy, ancestral and quirky, light on their feet but dense with fluttering rhythms and crazy-quilt images. Impeccably recorded and mixed—and analog through and through—the record sounds like a chant. Legendary arranger Van Dyke Parks has feathered Newsom's harp with strings, marimbas and plunk-y banjos, while Newsom's peculiar voice has matured and darkened without losing its jarring charm. Sure it's over the top—the follow-up to her acclaimed 2004 CD *The Milk-Eyed Mender* is, after all, named after a mythical Celtic city, pronounced *eees*. But the emotional peaks are so sharp, the wordplay so juicy, that all excesses are redeemed. The weird waif has become a bard.

ERIK DAVIS

DOWNLOAD: "Emily," "Sawdust & Diamonds," "Monkey & Bear"

KILLSWITCH ENGAGE

AS DAYLIGHT DIES ★★½

ROADRUNNER

New Englanders match ginormous riffs with equal melodrama

Schizophrenia has its uses. Just ask Killswitch Engage, who sound like they want to cry one second →

I LOVE THIS CD!

DANE COOK

MEAT LOAF
VERY BEST OF MEAT LOAF
EPIC

"C'mon! 'Paradise by the Dashboard Light'—are you kidding me? When I was in ninth grade, a girl gave me a hand job to that song. We're talking memories, baby."





Brand New, before dueling with their GIANT FATAL NINJA STARS!

CRISIS OF FAITH

LONG ISLAND EMO FOURSOME RAIL AT THE MAN UPSTAIRS

BRAND NEW

THE DEVIL AND GOD ARE RAGING INSIDE ME

★★★★

INTERSCOPE

JESSE LACEY'S LIFE is a disaster. The singer of Long Island's finest emo band sees catastrophe and spiritual crisis everywhere, and immerses himself so deeply in horrific metaphor that every mundane misfortune—breakup, insomnia, boredom—becomes an apocalypse of storms and shipwrecks. In songs that teeter between the gorgeously placid and the exhilaratingly hideous, Lacey leads a bipolar odyssey of blood and guts and desperate prayer, and at the end of his worries lies the ultimate fear: that God doesn't care. "I died for you one time," a bored Jesus tells him. "But never again." No wonder Lacey can't lighten up.

This is a Christian album the way U2's *War* is a Christian album: a passionate drama of doubt and faith set to an antsy, adrenalized beat. "I'm not scared to die/ But I'm a little scared of what comes after," Lacey confesses tenderly in "Jesus Christ." But Bono never screamed like this. "Sowing Season (Yeah)" is a meditation on death that flips from moody murmurs to a cry that could shake the pearly gates. And there's Old Testament terror in Lacey's voice—backed by tangles of guitar from him and Vin Accardi—when, in "You Won't

Know," he rains down vengefully on an ex-girlfriend: "I will float on and on/I have burned the bush that covered my light."

Bono also never sounded so much like Hannibal Lecter, either. More than love, more than abject theology, what drives Lacey is what drove Roger Waters in Pink Floyd's *The Wall*: the urge to go over the edge, in the guise of a concept album. And like Waters, what saves Lacey from a padded cell is intricacy, the vast ambition to create something as creepy as it is magnificent.

Brand New took a huge step forward in 2003 with *Deja Entendu*, tossing away everything predictable about emo. But the leap on their third studio album is even bigger, and gutsier too: using rock's earthly forces to amplify the heart's greatest loves and fears, and in the process summoning the kind of grandeur that blows minds in bedrooms and raises fists in stadiums. Amen to that.

BEN SISARIO

DOWNLOAD: "Sowing Season (Yeah)," "Jesus Christ," "Degausser"

JESSE LACEY'S CURRENT LISTENING

THE JESUS LIZARD GOAT TOUCH & GO

AMERICA AMERICA WARNER BROS.

BDF ●●●●●
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CEE-LO

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THE SOUL MACHINE

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Deftones: "Let's go plant some azaleas ... then drink their blood!"



APOCALYPSE WOW

BLEAK DOOMSDAY HOWLS FROM THE CALI NÜ-METAL VETS

DEFTONES

SATURDAY NIGHT WRIST ***

MAVERICK/WARNER BROS.

THE DEFTONES ARE gentle brutes, the types who'd pet a mouse only to accidentally snap its spine. Over the course of 18 years, they've out-heavied grungers, rap-rockers and screamo tykes, picking up a few of their mannerisms along the way, and enduring trends. They're *feeling* art-rockers at heart, lovers of soothing drones and earbud-filling studio detail, but they can't help reverting to white-knuckle bluster. Sometimes to great effect: Frontman Chino Moreno's harrowing, hardcore wig-outs, revived on the band's last album, have issued a collective atomic wedge to the Facebook set.

Where would this 500-pound gorilla like to sit now? At the top, in the rarified vicinity of U2—or, OK, Metallica. The Deftones' fifth album turns the dial to "statesmen," whether it's Moreno emoting portentously over a whitecap of guitar ("This is the end," he wails in the heavily layered endorphin release "Hole in the Earth") or, less effectively, with the addition of a jazz-jam, "Interlude." The cool electro of "Pink Cellphone"—featuring robotic but nevertheless female vocals—demonstrates a surprising range.

For statesmen, they sure are volatile: They fly off the handle in exhilarating eye-bulgers like "Rats! Rats! Rats!" where Moreno nearly expels a lung. His existential beefs have always powered the band's sound—he always thinks the end is nigh—and here he obsesses over a woman: Mother Nature. Whether it's global warming, the nuclear black market or bird flu that's got him spooked, Moreno's vision of our future on this planet is pretty bleak. "The earth will rot away," he announces elsewhere, as if this were simply an inconvenient truth. A dark dude to the end, he hasn't got much to offer in the way of solutions. He'd much rather take a wrecking ball to soothing assumptions, especially the one that says we control our own destinies. Lucky for the Deftones, they were meant for big—if not quite great—things.

NICK CATUCCI

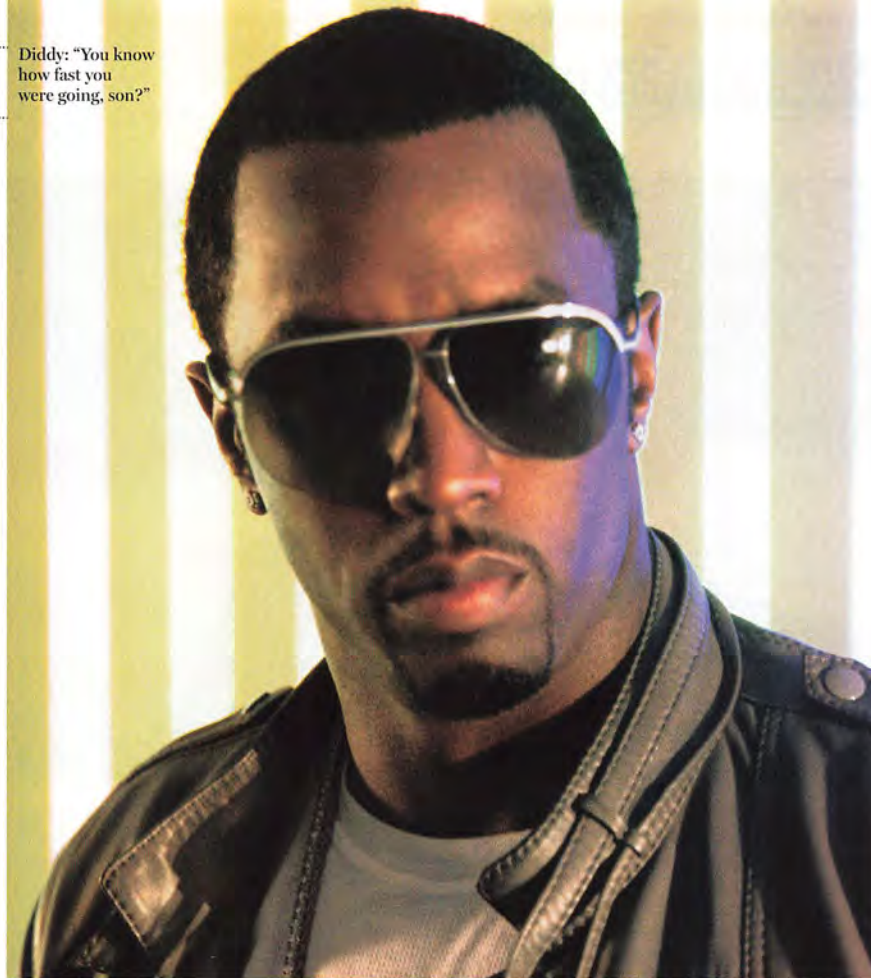
DOWNLOAD: "Rats! Rats! Rats!" "Hole in the Earth"

CHI CHENG'S CURRENT LISTENING

WILCO SUMMERTIME REPRISE

BACH/GLENN GOULD THE ART OF THE FUGUE SONY CLASSICAL

Diddy: "You know how fast you were going, son?"



PUFF 'N' STUFF

DIDDY TO THE WORLD: "WHO THE HELL AM I?"

DIDDY

PRESS PLAY ★★★

BAD BOY

TEN YEARS AGO, when Sean "Puffy" Combs inaugurated the "ghetto-fabulous" era, the debate broke down like this: "Puffy can't rap; he's ruining hip-hop" vs. "Who cares? Pass the bubbly." The ascendant rapper/producer/label owner/fashion mogul/philanthropist/Broadway performer/reality-show host knew he was a cork popper, not a block rocker, but today, having done all the deals one dealer can do, he'd still love to prove the haters wrong. Or maybe just remind them he's still here. On *Press Play*, his first studio album since 2001's flop, *The Saga Continues*, Diddy sets out to plot a course between the corners of Harlem, the clubs of Miami and the helipads of St. Tropez.

"Emotional bond to the game I'm attached/I gave most of you dudes life, now give back," he raps over heraldic soul horns on "I Am." Sure, today's top rappers don't go around name-dropping Diddy (unless they're on the Bad Boy payroll), but his power can still summon an all-star cast, from Christina Aguilera on the sweaty "Tell Me" to Big Boi and Ciara on the electro-thumping "Wanna Move" to Keyshia Cole

on "Last Night," an '80s R&B fantasia on which Diddy debuts his pouty mumble of a singing voice. Almost entirely free of the stolen-whole samples that brewed so much haterade in the '90s, the Puffer of *Press Play* wishes to remind us of his first pre-fame gig as a hardworking A&R rep, a music-loving kid looking for the best sounds, not just jacking the easiest ones. When he can't book the stylist, he nabs the style, from Prince grooves on "Special Feeling" to a Kanye-esque chorus of kids on "Hold On."

But where Kanye used a children's choir to examine the tension between art and religion, Diddy rides around on the lil' ones' shoulders, trying to decide between bragging about his effortless rap skills, his unquenchable work ethic or how little he needs fame in the first place. That schizophrenic conflict makes him one of pop's great head cases. An album that begins as a me-against-the-world celebration of self ends as a somber plea for emotional wholeness, with Jamie Foxx and His Diddness praying for soulful solace on "Partners for Life." Despite having it all, Sean "Puffy, Puff Daddy, P. Diddy, Diddy" Combs still can't decide who he needs to be. And that human frailty—not a crackin' beat or an ear to the street—makes him real to the core.

JON DOLAN

DOWNLOAD: "Tell Me," "Diddy Rock"

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New Releases The Guide



Hey, Sean Lennon, Charles Schwab called. He wants his clothes back!

and eat your children the next. On their previous album, *The End of Heartache*, they turned the merger of emo-worthy introspection and wall-crashing thrash into a minor mainstream hit. Producer-guitarist Adam Dutkiewicz gooses the extremes on this even bigger, buffer follow-up. The key is vocalist Howard Jones (no relation to the pouf-haired hitsman of the '80s), who breaks up the ball-busting rants with therapeutic bursts of crooning. His earnest dramatics and the fists-in-the-sky melodies play out over precision-strike riffing and demon drumming. It's highly calculated arena metal, and damned if it doesn't work.

GREG KOT

DOWNLOAD: "My Curse," "Daylight Dies"

SEAN LENNON

FRIENDLY FIRE ★★★

CAPITOL

Second album recounts how Lennon's girlfriend Bijou Phillips slept with his best friend

Sean Lennon, 31, has stopped worrying that he's you-know-who's son. He's spent years as an unassuming sideman in downtown New York, but his

calling is still pop—especially sullen, ambivalent love songs. *Friendly Fire* sounds like 10 ballads written by his dad's 1960s group. He uses their harmonic turns, their bitter-sweet dramas, their delayed-action drums, their segues from small-group modesty to orchestral pop. He's good at it; the melodies are well-shaped and the lyrics twist their knives elegantly: "Take your time but don't

take mine." Since he inherited the reediness but not the edge in Dad's voice, and he's no rocker, he sounds less like the Raspberries or Oasis than like Elliott Smith: a quietly maladjusted guy who builds better chord progressions than relationships.

JON PARELES

DOWNLOAD: "Wait for Me," "Parachute," "On Again, Off Again"

DAMIEN RICE

9 ★★★★★

HEFFA/VECTOR/WARNER BROS.

Following his breakup with actress Renée Zellweger, folkie makes an even more intense second album

Moody Irishman that he is, Damien Rice spends his second album bouncing between extremes. He's either sulking over a breakup to bare-minimum guitar or piano, or unleashing pent-up, distorted-voice hellfire as if he were making *OK Celtic Computer*.

In his lyrics, too, Rice vacillates between pining for the object of his desire and raging full-on over what she's done to him. Pondering the man his ex has taken up with, he delivers a zinger—"Does he drive you wild/Or just mildly free?"—worthy of pre-Buddhism Leonard Cohen. Whether he's sweet

or sour, though, Rice has a scruffy fervor that sets him apart from his squishier male-folkie peers, illustrated by the borderline-stalker sentiments snuck into the chamber-pop arrangements of "The Blower's Daughter,"

popularized in the film *Closer*. Even when he tips the sensitivity scales too much—warbling about a "girl that does yoga" in "Dogs"—Rice's innate, anti-lite-FM intensity saves him.

DAVID BROWNE

DOWNLOAD: "9 Crimes," "Rootless Tree," "The Animals Were Gone"

SENSES FAIL

STILL SEARCHING ★★★

VAGRANT

Young Warped Tour regulars bounce between the ER and the confessional

Where other pop-friendly punk acts are creamy, Senses Fail are aggressively crunchy: Every hook is enlarged by ample heavy-metal riffing, and on every verse singer James "Buddy" Nielsen howls as if his life depended on the decibel count. Perhaps it does: On the New Jersey quintet's second album, constant references to white coats, endless sleeps and drinking poison suggest a rather heavy early-twenties crisis for the 22-year-old. Luck-

I LOVE THIS CD!

RICKY
GERVAIS

BOB DYLAN
MODERN TIMES
COLUMBIA



"Even if I don't like them initially, Dylan's albums end up growing on me. They always get me in the end."

The Guide New Releases



Damien Rice considers changing first name to "Basmati."

ily, hard living hasn't sapped his ability to sell gargantuan choruses, and it's his sense of relentless recklessness that sets Senses Fall apart. The lone misstep: some clodding references to religion on the pedantic "The Rapture" and the doe-eyed "The Priest and the Matador" (Nielsen, out of the hospital, stares at clouds shaped "like dogs and cats"—aww). Clearly, it's never wise to mix church and Garden State.

ANDY GREENWALD

DOWNLOAD: "Can't Be Saved," "Every Day Is a Struggle"

SHINY TOY GUNS

WE ARE PILOTS ★★★

UNIVERSAL MOTOWN

This L.A. quartet may be the first electroclash tribute band

Shiny Toy Guns got a major label contract the old-fashioned way: with a kick-ass MySpace page and word of mouth they didn't pay for. This Los Angeles quartet is an indie-rock band playing electronica with tons of "hey, let's put on a laser light show" spunk. The music is full of synth cheese and intergalactic wooshes, the lyrics—about "supersonic gogotrons" and crying robots—are sung by a boy and a girl with angular haircuts. (Singer Cara Faye has been the subject of an Internet rumor suggesting it's really her voice on Paris Hilton's record.) They love Thompson Twins, Peaches and anything in between, because it's sexy and fun as hell.

RJ SMITH

DOWNLOAD: "Disko"

EMILIE SIMON

THE FLOWER BOOK ★★★

MILAN

Shamelessly chic singer-guitarist is latest oddball femme to *chante en Français*

The Frenchies can disco like Daft Punk; the Frenchies can rap like MC Solaar. But recently, the Frenchies also churn out



Tenacious D:
Rrrriipp!

hipster chanteuses with a throwback vibe like there's no tomorrow—and a whole lotta yesterday. To Camille and Carla Bruni, add Emilie Simon's urgent charms. She inhabits a technologized and be-stringed new wave between the perversity of the Stooges (whom she covers) and the feminine mythologies of Kate Bush (whom she flatters shamelessly). Selected from two French-released discs, this record is sequenced like classic American pop: alluring single, catchy remake, then uneven as a dirt road. Her eccentricity sometimes carries the day—and "Song of the Storm," with its strings, odd percussion and vocals wafting from a whisper to a howl, is a lovely ride.

JANE DARK

DOWNLOAD: "Song of the Storm," "I Wanna Be Your Dog"

THE SLITS

REVENGE OF THE KILLER SLITS ★★★½

SAF

Punk-rocking tomcats make strong return, 25 years later

Long before M.I.A., much less Fergie, the Slits dared to mash together reggae, club beats, punk and rude-girl raps. On this three-song comeback, only singer Ari Up and bassist Tessa Pollitt remain from the band's late-'70s lineup, which barely qualifies as a reunion. Yet they sound weirdly and wonderfully unchanged. The arch synth-dub singsong of "Slits Tradition" and the taunting pogo pop of "#1 Enemy" will make middle-aged punkers swoon, and the pop hook and relatively

upbeat message of "Kill Them With Love" show how the Slits have grown since their heyday. Even if some of their history-claiming hip-hop rhymes ("The first of our kind/Way ahead of our time") induce a cringe, this EP, like the best punk, doesn't overstay its welcome.

DAVID BROWNE

DOWNLOAD: "Slits Tradition," "Kill Them With Love"

TENACIOUS D

THE PICK OF DESTINY ★★

EPIC

Jack Black and the other guy present songs from their movie, demand oral sex

COCK-ROCK SCHLOCK

Metal's bombast parodies itself perfectly, almost invisibly, and if there's honest talent in Tenacious D, it's how lovingly they deliver the swift kick to the choad that reduces cock rock to mere comedy. On their second album, they sing amusingly of tasty riffs, but they also bust them (on pastoral acoustic and guitar-glory electric), and Jack Black's elastic, actor's-intonation voice can be a visceral pleasure, when it's not unbearable. But genuine, stadium-shouting metal could never sell out like this: The disc is basically a collection of plot-nudging song-sketches best used to commemorate dialogue from their film. Ronnie James Dio and Meat Loaf lend "Kickapoo" epic flair, but only the cute-filthy "Beelzeboss (The Final Showdown)" rocks, and while delivering smutty, unimpeachable cracks about mayonnaise-gargling. There's only so much even a metal fan can swallow.

NICK CATUCCI

DOWNLOAD: "Beelzeboss (The Final Showdown)" →

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Robin Thicke:
"No, I will *not*
play the *Groove
Parties* theme!"



ROBIN THICKE

THE EVOLUTION OF ROBIN THICKE ★★★

STAR TRAK/INTERSCOPE

White-boy R&B crooner goes falsetto-crazy

Robin Thicke really, really wants to be Justin Timberlake. The singer previously—tragically—known as plain old Thicke has taken his shot at blue-eyed-soul glory on his second album, corralling A-list hip-hop guest stars (Pharrell, Lil' Wayne), blending digital beats with wah-wah drenched neosoul atmospherics and layering on approximately 7,000 more wispy falsetto tracks than JT himself. Thicke can sing, and some nice melodies lurk amid the usual mix of breakup songs and sex talk. (Choice pickup line: "You're hiding WMDs.") But for a would-be star, Thicke has a serious charisma deficiency, a problem exacerbated by his falsetto habit: When he's paired with a belter like Faith Evans in "Got 2 Be Down," he gets blown clean away. Take heart, Thicke: At least you're better than Jamiroquai.

JODY ROSEN

DOWNLOAD: "Complicated"

THICKE: BARRY J. HOLMES/LANDONE



TOKYO POLICE CLUB

A LESSON IN CRIME ★★★½

PAPER BAG

Sprightly Toronto foursome collars and interrogates dystopian tunes

NOT
ACTUALLY
JAPANESE

Tokyo Police Club's lyrics fly by in clean declarative and imperative sentences that would gratify the English teachers at the Toronto-area high school from which all four members recently graduated. Yet in that shorthand they get across entire Philip K. Dick-style pulp operas about humanity's fucked-up future. The music on this seven-song, 16-minute debut EP has equal narrative economy: Keyboards, guitars and hand claps come on fast and loose but rarely with superfluous flash. Yes, they're derivative of recent U.K. and New York post-punk revivalists (the Strokes, Bloc Party). But rather than front as deep and edgy, Tokyo Police Club volley thoughtful matter with insouciant ease.

CARL WILSON

DOWNLOAD: "Citizens of Tomorrow," "Be Good"

VARIOUS ARTISTS

WHY THE HELL NOT ... : SONGS OF KINKY FRIEDMAN ★★★½

SUSTAIN

Tribute to a cigar-smoking croaker

For three decades, Austin singer, author, gubernatorial candidate and Jew Kinky Friedman has been a joke crying out for a better punch line—not even "Asshole From El Paso," the surest shot on his new best-of, *The Last of the Jewish Cowboys*, has the right timing or pitch control. But though this 10-song tribute album is no more consistent than any other tribute album, four tracks achieve a greatness Friedman himself has never approached. Todd Snider and Asleep at the Wheel's Ray Benson are proven comics. Thrash-metal grad Kevin Fowler gets lucky for once in his life. And Willie Nelson determines the specific gravity of a previously unrealized affront to decency: A tragicomic song about the Holocaust called "Ride 'Em Jewboy"? As it is written: "Anything worth crying can be smiled."

ROBERT CHRISTGAU

DOWNLOAD: Willie Nelson, "Ride 'Em Jewboy" →



Tokyo Police Club: "You have the right to remain unintimidated."

TOKYO POLICE CLUB: ALEX COLLADOS-NUNEZ

177 BLENDER



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New Releases The Guide

Snoop: "No, officer, you may not search my orchard."



SNOOPS ... I DID IT AGAIN

GANGSTA KINGPIN IMAGINES PEACE, A WHITE HOUSE POSITION

SNOOP DOGG

THA BLUE CARPET TREATMENT *****½**

DOGGYSTYLE/GEFFEN

IS THERE ANYONE left who is not down with Snoop Dogg? In the past few years, the foulmouthed ex-murder suspect has morphed into hip-hop's goodwill ambassador—starring in ads with Wayne Newton, hitting the links with Lee Iacocca, calling Jay Leno "nephew." He's part Shawn Carter, part Jimmy Carter: You get the feeling he could parachute into the West Bank with some Seagram's and a pound of L.A.'s stickiest icky—and the next thing you know, peace in the Middle Izzle. And hot tubs.

Now 35, Snoop has put his diplomatic muscle to work. Last year he founded a youth football league and spearheaded the clemency fight for gang leader Stanley "Tookie" Williams. On his eighth album, Mr. 187-on-a-Motherfuckin'-Cop wants to unite black with brown, Blood with Crip, East Coast with West. "Imagine," his first collaboration with Dr. Dre in half a decade, posits a crack-and-gun-free gangsta's paradise, and "Have a Talk With God" borrows an old Stevie Wonder jam (as well as the actual Stevie Wonder) for a funky come-to-Jesus sermon.

Beatwise, *Blue Carpet* is a throwback to his trunk-rattling G-funk heyday, from Timbaland's ferociously percussive "Get a Light" to the doomsday bass crunch of "Gang Banging 101." Clips are still emptied, weed is still smoked, bitches are still skeeted on. (Apparently Snoop's inclusiveness doesn't yet extend to anyone without a Y chromosome.) On "Put This Thang on You," he gets lovesick puppy dog Ne-Yo to croon about "hittin' it from the back," while "A Bitch I Knew," an Iceberg Slim-worthy chronicle of the Dogg's pimp-tacular exploits, imagines a visit from the president. Snoop, counseling the leader of the free world, advises, "Make the First Lady sell a little pussy for you." Don't reserve that cabinet office just yet.

JOSHEELS

DOWNLOAD: "That's That Shit" feat. R. Kelly, "Get a Light"

SNOOP DOGG'S CURRENT LISTENING

TOO SHORT BLOW THE WHISTLE *JIVE*

CURTIS MAYFIELD THE VERY BEST OF CURTIS
MAYFIELD *RHINO*

WORTH THE WAITS

ROCK'S SURREAL CARNIVAL BARKER CLEANS OUT HIS VAULT

TOM WAITS

ORPHANS: BRAWLERS, BAWLERS AND BASTARDS ★★☆☆

ANTI-

"YOU CAN GET just about anything in this world," Tom Waits says during an interlude on the "Bastards" installment of this three-disc set. "You can get a whale's pancreas ... I can get you one!" He could sell it to you, too. For close to 30 years, Waits has been one of music's great Dumpster divers, a guy who can hawk the old weird noises of lost civilizations as the new hip thing. But this three-years-in-the-making, 54-song collection of revived cast-offs and rarities written for screen and stage work is his toughest sell yet, even with 30 new songs. Produced with his songwriting partner and wife, Kathleen Brennan, it's described by Waits himself as "emptying out our pockets on the table after an evening of gambling."

The jumble of stuff that spills out—

from Delta blues to nineteenth-century ballads to spoken-word rambles—is surprisingly consistent, at times transcendent, and not just for people intimately acquainted with Waits's honeyed craziness. The "Brawlers" disc is the most traditional, a hungry-man's helping of rattletrap R&B and hell-bound blues hollers, delivered in the beat-poet bullfrog shout that's one of pop's most distinct blurts. Its high point, the lovely Celtic-tinged single "Bottom of the World," adds a dollop of sweet lament that's similar to the ballads on "Bawlers," which range from the surprisingly velvety Chet Baker-esque "Little Man" to the martial soldier's prayer "Take Care of All of My Children." There aren't too many curveballs on either disc, but even Waits scholars will be a little freaked by the surrealist potpourri "Bastards," which includes a monologue about bugs, covers of Skip Spence and Daniel Johnston (two songwriters even odder than Waits), a Charles Bukowski poem about placelessness and a dwarf's work song. Not every bone Waits turns over rattles with ancient wisdom, but it's still a rich depiction of his Ahab-like quest for the pulpy pancreas of popular song.

JON DOLAN

DOWNLOAD: "Bottom of the World," "First Kiss," "Nirvana"



TOP 10 WIRELESS DOWNLOADS



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LUDACRIS

2. SMACK THAT

AKON

3. LIPS OF AN ANGEL

HINDER

4. SEXYBACK

JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE

5. STUNTIN' LIKE MY DADDY

BIRDMAN & LIL WAYNE

6. CHAIN HANG LOW

JIBBS

7. WHITE & NERDY

WEIRD AL YANKOVIC

8. LONDON BRIDGE

FERGIE

9. BUTTONS

THE PUSSYCAT DOLLS

10. IT'S OKAY (ONE BLOOD)

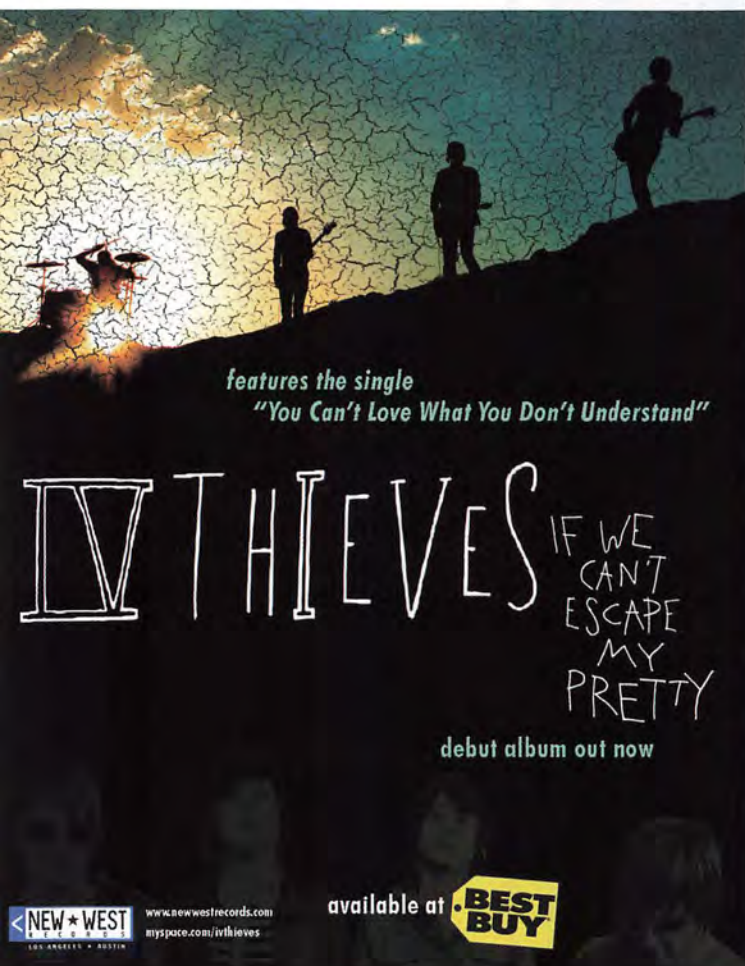
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Townshend and Daltrey: "Dressing up like your grandkids is fun!"

WHO CARES?

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THE WHO

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MEET
THE OLD
BOSS

FAITH, TERRORISM, GLOBAL warming, war, the power of music, middle-aged nostalgia ... Hey! Stop yawning! Pete Townshend and Roger Daltrey, the surviving half of the Who, have revived the old brand—er, band—name to make the Who's first full studio album since 1982, when they released *It's Hard* and did their first farewell tour. It's harder now; *Endless Wire* creaks with effort.

In brash, power-chorded '60s songs that created the foundation of metal and punk, the Who was Townshend's vehicle for reflection and self-definition. As the decade ended, he was writing rock operas, including one called *Lifhouse*, which envisioned the whole world linked electronically. When the band vetoed it, Daltrey reportedly complained, "You'll never get enough wire."

Hence *Endless Wire*, which dips back into *Lifhouse* and ends with a 10-song mini-opera based on Townshend's blog novella, *The Boy Who Heard Music*, about a young band and a burned-out rock star. Made mostly by Townshend alone in his home studio, it's an album with ambition galore, including bits of narrative and songs narrated by God and Judas.

Elaborate pop chorales and sparse acoustic songs like the simply grateful "You Stand by Me" show that Townshend took care with the melodies, and there are some lovely production details. But there's also Daltrey heaving his overwrought way through every line he sings, and some achingly bad lyrics: "We broke down barriers/We found a dream to dream."

Townshend hasn't lacked for pretension since his first mini-opera, "A Quick One," four decades ago. But other Who opuses barreled ahead with brashness and comic relief, at least due partly to dryly humorous bassist John Entwistle and wild-man drummer Keith Moon, R.I.P. (Zak Starkey, who now gives the Who its kick onstage, barely appears here; Townshend used a more deferential drummer, Peter Huntington.) What remains is a concept that's been stewing too long and a singer who's one scream away from a hernia. Townshend and Daltrey take themselves so seriously that no one else has to.

JON PARELES

DOWNLOAD: "It's Not Enough"

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NEIL YOUNG AND CRAZY HORSE

LIVE AT THE FILLMORE EAST
★★★★

REPRISE

Unearthed live set rings with long hair, even longer guitar solos

Back when guitarist and future drug casualty Danny Whitten was a focus of the band, Crazy Horse was looser, funkier and less bludgeoningly monolithic than they eventually became. From a wonderfully spiky "Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere" to a loping "Wonderin'," this excavated March 1970 recording captures how warm, limber and down-home the initial matchup was. It's a shame this rescue from the vaults comprises a mere six songs (one of which, the stoner hoedown "Come On Baby Let's Go Downtown," was released 31 years ago on *Tonight's the Night*). Still, as the first release in a long-promised "Archives" series from Young, it's hot stuff—and not merely for air-guitar diehards who need new versions of "Cowgirl in the Sand" and "Down by the River."

DAVID BROWNE

DOWNLOAD: "Winterlong," "Down by the River," "Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere"

YUSUF

AN OTHER CUP ★★★½

YA/ATLANTIC

A mellow philosopher of the '70s returns after a 28-year hiatus

Many former pop stars have returned after long absences, but only one has come back as a walking geopolitical lightning rod: Yusuf Islam, the Muslim name of the patchouli balladeer known as Cat

Stevens. A convert to Islam in 1977, he retired from secular music, remaining in the news chiefly for his apparent support for the fatwa against novelist Salman Rushdie in 1989 and his presence on a no-fly watch

list in 2004, which temporarily prevented him from entering the U.S. He addresses this legacy with an overwrought version of the Animals' 1965 hit "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood," turning it into a wheedling plea for exoneration. The bullying production threatens to obliterate what's good here: A half-dozen gentle seeker's songs with meditative acoustic textures and lyrics advocating reasonableness among humankind, which was always Cat Stevens's domain.

TOM MOON

DOWNLOAD: "One Day at a Time," "In the End"

ASTONISHING FACT!

Mammoth and Cody, two of the tame buffalo used in the stampee scene in *Dances With Wolves*, were borrowed from Neil Young.

BLENDER APPROVED

The best new releases from the past months



CLIPSE

HELL HATH NO FURY

From two dope-dealing brothers, it's the most skillful, menacing hip-hop album of the year.



MY CHEMICAL ROMANCE

THE BLACK PARADE

REPRISE

Gerard Way and Co.'s ass-kicking concept album about cancer, zombies and their love of Queen.



NELLIE MCKAY

PRETTY LITTLE HEAD

Album two from this eccentric NYC nightingale is another double, all sparkling wit and sparkly attitude.



JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE

FUTURESEX/LOVESOUNDS

JIVE

JT and Timbaland reunite for a space-age sexyfest, getting sweaty at the club with or without Cameron.

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7

JAY-Z

"SHOW ME WHAT YOU GOT"

KINGDOM COME

Finally! Three whole years after his official "retirement," His Jig-ganess returns with a Just Blaze-produced comeback track about ... well, his comeback. The race-car-themed video, meanwhile, features Dale Earnhardt Jr. and Danica Patrick—with whom Jay also stars in a new commercial for Budweiser Select. So *that's* how he's going to solve the water crisis.

HOW WE DID IT

aolmusic.com

The Most Wanted Songs chart is based on the number of audience searches, downloads and video plays on AOLmusic.com.

POSITION	TITLE	ARTIST	ALBUM/LABEL
1	"MY LOVE"	JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE FEAT. T.I.	FUTURESEX/LOVESOUNDS JIVE
2	"TELL ME"	DIDDY FEAT. CHRISTINA AGUILERA	PRESS PLAY BAD BOY
3	"GALLERY"	MARIO VAZQUEZ	MARIO VAZQUEZ J
4	"WELCOME TO THE BLACK PARADE"	MY CHEMICAL ROMANCE	THE BLACK PARADE REPRISE
5	"FERGALICIOUS"	FERGIE	THE DUTCHESS INTERSCOPE
6	"LYING IS THE MOST FUN A GIRL CAN HAVE..."	PANIC! AT THE DISCO	A FEVER YOU CAN'T SWEAT OUT FUELED BY RAMEN
7	"SHOW ME WHAT YOU GOT"	JAY-Z	KINGDOM COME DEF JAM
8	"MANEATER"	NELLY FURTADO	LOOSE GEFEN
9	"MONEY MAKER"	LUDACRIS FEAT. PHARRELL	RELEASE THERAPY DEF JAM
10	"IRREPLACEABLE"	BEYONCÉ	B'DAY COLUMBIA/SONY URBAN MUSIC
11	"LIPS OF AN ANGEL"	HINDER	EXTREME BEHAVIOR UNIVERSAL
12	"TOO LITTLE TOO LATE"	JOJO	THE HIGH ROAD DA FAMILY/BLACKGROUND
13	"HURT"	CHRISTINA AGUILERA	BACK TO BASICS RCA
14	"HOW TO SAVE A LIFE"	THE FRAY	HOW TO SAVE A LIFE EPIC
15	"PULLIN' ME BACK"	CHINGY FEAT. TYRESE	HOODSTAR CAPITOL
16	"CHAIN HANG LOW"	JIBBS	JIBBS FEAT. JIBBS GEFEN
17	"PROMISE"	CIARA	CIARA: THE EVOLUTION LA FACE/JIVE
18	"REMEMBER THE NAME"	FORT MINOR	THE RISING TIED WARNER BROS.
19	"CHASING CARS"	SNOW PATROL	EYES OPEN INTERSCOPE
20	"SMACK THAT"	AKON FEAT. EMINEM	KONVICTED UNIVERSAL/MOTOWN
21	"WAIT A MINUTE"	THE PUSSYCAT DOLLS	PCD INTERSCOPE
22	"CALL ME WHEN YOU'RE SOBER"	EVANESCENCE	THE OPEN DOOR WIND-UP
23	"BE EASY"	YOUNG HOT ROD FEAT. MARY J. BLIGE	FASTLANE G-UNIT
24	"WHEN YOU WERE YOUNG"	THE KILLERS	SAM'S TOWN ISLAND
25	"GOODBYE MY LOVER"	JAMES BLUNT	BACK TO BEDLAM CUSTARD/ATLANTIC
26	"FAR AWAY"	NICKELBACK	ALL THE RIGHT REASONS ROADRUNNER
27	"GONE DADDY GONE"	GNARLS BARKLEY	ST. ELSEWHERE DOWNTOWN/ATLANTIC
28	"IT ENDS TONIGHT"	THE ALL-AMERICAN REJECTS	MOVE ALONG INTERSCOPE
29	"SHOW STOPPER"	DANITY KANE	DANITY KANE BAD BOY
30	"LET'S RIDE (STRIP CLUB)"	THE GAME	THE DOCTOR'S ADVOCATE GEFEN
31	"JUMP"	MADONNA	CONFESSIONS ON A DANCE FLOOR WARNER BROS.
32	"FACE DOWN"	THE RED JUMPSUIT APPARATUS	DON'T YOU FAKE IT VIRGIN
33	"S.E.X."	LYFE JENNINGS	THE PHOENIX COLUMBIA/SONY URBAN MUSIC

WEEK ENDING // SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 5



11

HINDER

"LIPS OF AN ANGEL"

EXTREME BEHAVIOR

From Oklahoma City, five scruffy dudes who say they're "bringing back the good old decadent days when sex, drugs and rock & roll weren't dirty words." Hence the crunchy nü-grunge riffs and burning lust of this debut single. Catch them this month as they support Aerosmith, hoofing it from Detroit to Sacramento.



12

JOJO

"TOO LITTLE TOO LATE"

THE HIGH ROAD

The 15-year-old R&B singer/budding actress is back with this kiss-off to a bad boyfriend. The video for the single centers around a soccer match—no small coincidence, since JoJo dates 17-year-old phenom Freddy Adu. You can watch her costar as Robin Williams's surly daughter in *RV*—on DVD now.

14

THE FRAY

"HOW TO SAVE A LIFE"

HOW TO SAVE A LIFE

Mom-rock's answer to Death Cab for Cutie, Denver's the Fray have landed their music on TV shows including *Scrubs*, *Bones* and *One Tree Hill*. Now this piano-heavy jam is the official promo song for the new season of *Grey's Anatomy*. McDreamy fans can see them play in London this month.



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THE DOORS

PERCEPTION (40TH ANNIVERSARY BOX)

★★★★★

RHINO/ELEKTRA/DMC

THE DOORS ARE the perfect band when you're 17, waking to life's possibilities and pulsing with 10,000 volts of libido. In that impressionable state, an extravaganza like "The End," with its Oedipal drama and entrancing guitar-as-sitar aura of mystery, sounds like the most profound and intense moment of your life. Singer and cult leader Jim Morrison even invoked sensualist poets like William Blake and Arthur Rimbaud—so did Bob Dylan, but Morrison made it sexier. Factor in the attractive shape of his life arc, its mythic hurtle through reckless hedonism to an early death at age 27, and it's easy to see why his music, his leather pants and his lizard fixation have endured for 40 years of teenagers.

Maybe no one older than 17 should have an ounce of time for a pop singer who anointed himself an "erotic politician." Wasn't this Californian Adonis a pig of a human being, a (literally) stinking drunk, an egomaniac who rampaged over most everybody he dealt with? Aren't his poet-as-prophet pretensions insufferably clunky and self-aggrandizing? When he goes into revolutionary mode ("Five to One," "The Unknown Soldier"), doesn't the skin crawl off your bones in embarrassment? Worse, isn't the music dated and overblown, from epic song-suites like "Celebration of the Lizard" to the bleary blues jive of "Back Door Man"?

Well, Morrison is hardly short for company when it comes to rock assholes who overdid the liquor, and his psychedelic doggerel is no more cringe-worthy than John Lennon in LSD mode. People forget Jimbo's sense of humor, manifested in his surreal ad-libs—"cobra on my left, leopard on my right" in "The Soft Parade"—and the knowing zest he brought to his shaman-as-buffoon persona. As for the music, most of it still sounds pretty glorious. It remains an unusual sound, not just because of the lead-instrument prominence of Ray Manzarek's ornate keyboards, but because of the way the Doors expanded driving R&B with a cinematic clarity, thanks to spacious, glistening arrangements and production (more vivid than ever in this fabulously remastered incarnation). Robby Krieg-

er's guitar solos are elegantly restrained and succinct, while John Densmore's drumming is deft enough to make a waltz rhythm swing on "Shaman's Blues." In keeping with the spirit of the late '60s, the Doors salted in all kinds of unlikely flavors: flamenco on "Spanish Caravan," German cabaret with their cover of "Alabama Song," cocktail jazz with "Riders on the Storm." They even anticipated disco, bizarrely, with one segment of the audacious 8:41 "The Soft Parade."

Perception includes the six studio LPs recorded before Morrison's 1971 death in Paris (which did wonders for French tourism), plus DVDs of performance footage and outtakes highlighted by the demo of "Celebration of the Lizard." You can retrace the band's journey from the bold entrance of *The Doors* (their best, if most overexposed, album) through



IT'S EASY TO SEE WHY MORRISON'S MUSIC, LEATHER PANTS AND LIZARD FIXATION HAVE ENDURED FOR 40 YEARS OF TEENAGERS.

Strange Days (their darkest and most psychedelic), onto *Waiting for the Sun* (their most confused and least satisfying), *The Soft Parade* (their funniest and most underrated) and the supposed return-to-bluesy-form of *Morrison Hotel* (their dreariest and most over-esteemed), before ending with *L.A. Woman* (their most accomplished and poignant).

Morrison's version of "the blues" owed as much to Frank Sinatra as to Muddy Waters, and his sonorous majesty made him one of rock's true originals. Many in the legion of Jim-imitators are rock greats in their own right: Iggy Pop converted Morrison into the sexless monomania of punk rock, while Patti Smith adapted his persona to become the world's first female-rocker-as-shaman. Joy Division's Ian Curtis translated the baritone-booming doomy side of the Doors into goth, and Jane's Addiction's Perry Farrell updated Morrison's excess-as-the-road-to-the-palace-of-wisdom shtick.

So is there any wisdom to be found at the end of that highway? In hindsight, Morrison's freedom-chasing looks more like irresponsibility, the lust for "experience" closer to selfishness. Yet in an era when 17-year-olds are confronted by a resurgent puritanism that seeks to roll back the real gains of the '60s and constrain pleasure and adventure, there's a certain imperishable truth and urgency to Morrison's warning that "no eternal reward will forgive us now for wasting the dawn." In a strange way, he was a true American patriot, his spirit as large as the land itself. *SIMON REYNOLDS*

DOWNLOAD: "End of the Night," "Strange Days," "The Soft Parade," "Peace Frog"



"Father ... I want to kill you. Mother ... I wanted to ... play you in darts, perhaps."

THE SCORE

★★★★★ CLASSIC

★★★★ GREAT

★★★ GOOD

★★ MEDIOCRE

★ FOUL

BEE GEES

THE STUDIO ALBUMS
1967-1968 ★★½

RHINO

Brotherly trio's ostentatious '60s hits, soaked in psychedelia

A decade before they became medallion-swinging disco titans with their massive *Saturday Night Fever* soundtrack, the Bee Gees frolicked in Baroque-pop pastures that blossomed a bouquet of sweet smash ballads. Combining Maurice's multi-instrumental chops, Robin's aching quaver and Barry's R&B acumen, the Brothers Gibb played, wrote and harmonized waves of velvety, at times nearly morbid melodrama ("Words" and "New York Mining Disaster 1941," respectively) over the orchestral arrangements of fellow Australian Bill Shepherd. This six-CD set of the Gibb's first three international albums in stereo and mono mixes, non-LP singles, alternate versions and copious outtakes may seem like overkill for a band remembered for its AM-radio anthems, but *Bee Gees 1st*, *Horizontal* and *Idea* are startlingly filler-free, and hit-worthy discoveries like "Chocolate Symphony" reveal overlooked psychedelic depths and rougher dimensions of these quintessential pop craftsmen.

BARRY WALTERS

DOWNLOAD: "The Earnest of Being George," "Barker of the U.F.O.," "Let There Be Love" (Alternate Mix)

JAMES BROWN

THE SINGLES: THE FEDERAL YEARS: 1956-1960 ★★★★★

HIP-SELECT.COM

The early, bitter career of the man who built funk out of soul

Fifty years ago, James Brown looked like a one-hit wonder. After his debut R&B meltdown "Please, Please, Please," he kept missing the charts, screaming himself raw on wounded blues, novelty songs and attempts to duplicate his hit's formula. By the second disc of this set, though, he'd been touring hard enough that everything from deep-soul ballads like "Try Me" (whose

previously unreleased demo is a bonus here) to his frenetic reworking of the "5" Royales' "Think" found its audience. This is the first of an Internet-order-only series compiling all of JB's A- and B-sides, many long out of print, with illuminating liner notes—his tangled discography needed something like this, and his try-anything-once aesthetic keeps it out of a stylistic rut.

DOUGLAS WOLK

DOWNLOAD: "I Feel That Old Feeling Coming On," "Good Good Lovin'," "Think"

CAPTAIN BEEFHEART AND THE MAGIC BAND

DOC AT THE RADAR STATION

★★★★

ICE CREAM FOR CROW

★★★½

ASTRALWERKS

Desert genius says good-bye to music on early-'80s albums

Nobody knew that Don Van Vliet's 1980 and 1982 albums would plunge the reclusive avant-faux bluesman into silence, but in retrospect you can hear it coming. Compared to 1978's goofy, songful *Shiny Beast (Bat Chain Puller)*, *Doc at the Radar Station* is as two-dimensional as the painting that soon proved Van Vliet's sole artistic passion. A typically deep, jagged, bent and unpredictable realization of his musical vision—which was roughly triangulated by Howlin' Wolf, Ornette Coleman and Pere Ubu, with surrealist poetry for content—it's certainly powerful. But despite a few Mellotron flourishes, it's also forbidding, definitely not the work of someone who takes much joy in lyricism or humor. *Ice Cream for Crow*, recorded with a reconstituted Magic Band featuring tireless guitarist Gary Lucas, is less of the same. Beefheart could be aimless or misguided. This music is neither. But it is the end.

ROBERT CHRISTGAU

DOWNLOAD: "Ashtray Heart," "Sue Egypt," "Ice Cream for Crow"

CEE-LO

CLOSET FREAK: THE BEST OF CEE-LO GREEN ★★½

ARISTA/LEGACY

Before going "Crazy," Cee-Lo presaged Atlanta's ascent

Most know Cee-Lo Green as the interesting half of Gnarls Barkley, but before his stint as a costume-sporting dandy, he belted nasal, velvety hooks for Atlanta's Goodie Mob. This collection highlights his role in

Dixie's rise to hip-hop hegemony: Blending folksy fingerpicking, gospel and funk, 1995's *Soul Food* basically invented the Dirty South sound, and Green's bucolic drawl shot an astute, spiritual rebuke at the coasts' icy gangsta nihilisms. In 2002, Cee-Lo went so-lo, experimenting with spoken word and bebop scatting. In 2004, he curbed these tics and flirted with pop perfection: The woodblock-rocking "I'll Be Around" and a down-home burst of joie de vivre called "The Art of Noise" prove that if any Southerner deserves a "3000" after his name, it's this guy.

ROQUE STREW

DOWNLOAD: "The Art of Noise," "I'll Be Around"

DEF LEPPARD

HYSTERIA—DELUXE EDITION

★★½

UME

Blokies from Sheffield, U.K., turn metal tricks into a pop smash

They may be a punch line now, but Def Leppard are also one of the most popular rock outfits in history. They sold 12 million copies of their fourth album, without gimmicks or bimbos galore in their videos; they even did it without a two-armed drummer, for god's sake. Say what you want about the imitators they wrought—Baroque, tousled tossers from Britny Fox to Poison—but in 1987, Def Leppard and überproducer Mutt Lange coughed up a string of hooky hairballs and inspired a generation of metallers to stop being so hellishly dour. This package features a gluttonous 15 extra tracks, including B-sides, live recordings and remixes, plus a bombastic cover of "Radar Love." All that's missing is a clip-on mullet.

RJ SMITH

DOWNLOAD: "Pour Some Sugar on Me"

MOBY

GO: THE VERY BEST OF MOBY ★★½

V2

A dance-music ambassador who stayed true to his roots—even when he messed with the blues

It isn't easy being king in a genre most people know only through car ads—unless you're the guy who got rich off them. Yet in licensing his music to Volkswagen and Baileys Irish Cream, the lil' bald titan of techno didn't sell out an underground sound, he explored its contours. The blues-sampling tunes on 1999's mega-hit *Play* (from which this compilation draws heavily) have



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IN STORES 11.21.06
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Robert Plant asks the Wizard for some courage.

Four dalmatians were killed just to make Moby's Halloween costume.

the same expansive pulse, hopeful melodic rush and reassuring message as his 1991 rave anthem "Go"—they're just poignantly sadder. A ham-fisted new ode to New York with Debbie Harry is sad, too, just not in an enjoyable way. And a limited-edition disc of remixes by DJ "stars" proves Moby's dedication to a scene he quickly outgrew.

JON DOLAN

DOWNLOAD: "South Side," "We Are All Made of Stars"

PAVEMENT

WOWEE ZOWEE: SORDID SENTINELS EDITION ★★★★★

MATADOR

When popularity beckoned, the ambivalent kings of indie-rock got weirder—and better

Legend has it that the arch-indie-rock absurdists Pavement balked at semi-fame after their scintillating 1994 album *Crooked Rain, Crooked Rain*, chucking melodicism for moodier jags. Bosh to that. *Wowee Zowee*, released the following year, is the band's peak. It's got guitar-smartie Stephen Malkmus's

best freak-out ("Half a Canyon"), plus sideman Scott Kannberg's best song (the wistful "Kennel District"), as well as some spooky country rock ("Pueblo," "Father to a Sister of Thought") and the definitive swat of cosmopolite twats ("Rattled by the Rush"). Alternate takes of album tracks are joined on this expanded edition by apt covers like "No More Kings" from the *Schoolhouse Rock! Rocks* compilation and the synthy B-side "Kris Kraft." The core's best moments, like the dive-bomb guitar plunge on the muscular "Grounded," still define standoffish bravura.

LAURA SINAGRA

DOWNLOAD: "Grounded," "AT & T," "Father to a Sister of Thought"

ROBERT PLANT

NINE LIVES ★★★½

RHINO

Nine-disc box set chronicles Zep horndog's melancholy afterglow In 1982, when Robert Plant released his slow-burn solo debut, *Pictures at Eleven*, he wasn't strutting back onto the

world's stage—he was gliding. The ground had dropped out from under him: John Bonham had died two years earlier, and Led Zeppelin immediately died with him. Plant, hard rock's most iconic wailer, dropped into a sultry near-whisper with flourishes; his sex-and-swordplay fantasies morphed into love-and-loss plaints. This accounting of his entire solo career includes a corny pass at early-rock covers and a mid-'80s buckling to cake-frosting keyboard trends. But there are also extraordinarily meditative hits ("Big Log," "Ship of Fools") and some equal album cuts ("Pledge Pin"); a deft, far-ranging covers disc (*Dreamland*); and the two inspired albums he has made since 1993. Even as the volume dropped, Plant never lost his restless spirit.

NICK CATUCCI

DOWNLOAD: "Ship of Fools," "Big Log"

SIMPLE MINDS

EARLY GOLD ★★★½

CAROLINE

Entrancing electronic experiments from the band once called Johnny & the Self-Abusers

Blue-collar boys dazzled by the electro-rock fusion of Berlin-era Bowie, Simple Minds and their epic pretensions were poo-pooed by Glasgow's post-punk elite. Yet as warped, singsong glam-pop like 1979's "Chelsea Girl" made way for vast, glacial mantras, the band came of age, and the likes of 1981's shimmering "Love Song" were envied by Bono and sampled by subsequent waves of U.K. techno artists. When the pop charts welcomed the atypically jaunty "Promised You a Miracle" in 1982, their art phase (succinctly compiled in this 15-track collection) was effectively over. And though the horizon promised stadium paydays, *The Breakfast Club*—soundtrack stardom and high-profile marriages for singer Jim Kerr—first Chrissie Hynde, then actress Patsy Kensit—tastemaker acclaim would never return.

TONY POWER

DOWNLOAD: "Love Song," "I Travel"

BLENDER APPROVED

The best reissues from the past months



PRETENDERS

PRETENDERS

RHINO

Chrissie Hynde came out swinging on this spiky, sexy 1980 debut, now with rarities.



FATS WALLER

IF YOU GOT TO ASK, YOU AIN'T GOT IT

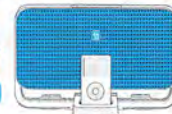
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THE VELVET UNDERGROUND

THE SECOND MOST INFLUENTIAL BAND EVER, THEY INVENTED ALT-ROCK, FEEDBACK SOLOS AND PLAYING IN SUNGLASSES BY DOUGLAS WOLK

EVERY
ORIGINAL
CD
REVIEWED

IN 1965, LOU REED was a pop songwriter from Long Island with poetic aspirations, fascinated with the dirty side of New York City. He joined forces with John Cale, a bassist and violist from the avant-garde classical world, then with ultra-primitive drummer Maureen "Mo" Tucker and hard-strumming guitarist Sterling Morrison. Naming themselves after a sleazy paperback about S&M, the Velvet Underground fell under the wing of art star and socialite Andy Warhol, who hooked them up with an impassive German chanteuse called Nico and made them the musical stars of his multimedia road show, the Exploding Plastic Inevitable. The Velvets made only four studio albums—two rawly experimental, the other two (after bassist Doug Yule replaced Cale) cool and restrained—and barely grazed the charts in their day: When the pop scene was in Technicolor, they were in harsh black-and-white. After Reed quit in 1970, though, their renown as the godparents of alternative rock led to a series of archival releases, and finally to a brief victory lap: a 1993 reunion tour.



The Velvet Underground, 1966: (L-R) Nico, Sterling Morrison, Maureen Tucker, Lou Reed and John Cale.

ESSENTIAL

THE VELVET UNDERGROUND & NICO

VERVE, 1967

★★★★★



As Brian Eno once noted, the Velvets' first album didn't sell many copies, but "everyone who bought one of those 30,000

copies started a band." Andy Warhol designed the legendary double entendre cover and gave them art-world cachet; they returned the favor by making a genuinely radical record. It leads with its shocking noise (especially Cale's acidic squalls of viola and Reed's seen-it-all drawl) and shocking lyrics (a seven-minute, two-chord, sympathetic drug song called "Heroin"), but the band's magnificent rock & roll rhythm section makes it stick. Reed already knew as much of heaven as of hell, too—the three songs Nico sings are poignant and lovely. **Download:** "I'm Waiting for the Man," "Heroin," "Venus in Furs"

THE VELVET UNDERGROUND

MGM, 1969

★★★★★



After constant clashes, Reed booted Cale in the fall of 1968 and replaced him with bassist-singer Doug Yule. On the

Velvets' third album, they sounded like a totally different, much quieter band, controlled and even shyly pretty (the Tucker-sung "After Hours" is a triumph of winning amateurism). Even when it gear-shifts up to rock or dives into the druggy experiment "The Murder Mystery," it's as weightless as a skipping stone, propelled by Reed and Morrison's fluttering two-guitar colloquy. Reed's calloused, cocky attitude from the first two albums has given way to an almost Zen compassion: handing himself over to fate, to a Jesus he struggles to understand, to an adulterous lover's thrall. **Download:** "Beginning to See the Light," "Candy Says," "Pale Blue Eyes"

GREAT

WHITE LIGHT/WHITE HEAT

VERVE, 1968

★★★★



A mess, but a phenomenal mess, splattered against a wall by the now-Nico-less quartet's speed-freak velocity. Reed

babbles about amphetamines and mainlines and tranny blow jobs and plays the screechiest guitar solos anyone had ever recorded. Tucker pounds like a caveman demanding breakfast and "Sister Ray" is 17 minutes of everybody trying to stab a three-chord riff harder than everybody else.

Download: "I Heard Her Call My Name," "Sister Ray"

LOADED

COTILLION, 1970

★★★★★



The Velvets were disintegrating. Tucker was on maternity leave and their new label was

demanding pop songs. Shortly before the band finished making *Loaded*, Reed, as he put it, "left them to their album full of hits that I made": the four-chord monument "Sweet Jane," some bruised, Yule-sung elegies to the '60s dream and, best of all, a song called "Rock and Roll" that earns the grand title. The "Fully Loaded" reissue adds outtakes and demos, many of which Reed rerecorded for his first few solo albums.

Download: "Rock and Roll," "Sweet Jane"

1969: VELVET UNDERGROUND LIVE VOL. I

MERCURY, 1974

★★★★★



"The unanimous opinion," Morrison once said, "was that we were 10 times better live than we were on records." Here's

proof—his rhythm guitar on this album's blistering version of "What Goes On" alone spawned an entire school of pop. The songs are rolling grooves with incredible momentum, and the crowd noise makes it sound like there were 20 people in the audience.

Download: "What Goes On," "Lisa Says"



CHECK IT OUT

1969: VELVET UNDERGROUND LIVE VOL. 2

MERCURY, 1974

★★★★



The second and only slightly lesser half of what was once a double album, with a quieter repertoire and more relaxed

performances. The dreamy, majestic rush of "Ocean" exemplifies the mindful patience of their later phase as much as "Heroin" (also included here) represents their brutal, seething early period. As a bonus, there are a couple of songs they never recorded in the studio.

Download: "Ocean," "Some Kinda Love"

VU

POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL, 1985

★★★★



In 1969, the Velvets recorded more than an album's worth of material their label didn't even bother to release.

By 1985, though, the band's glory was finally common knowledge, they were being bootlegged constantly, and the best songs from the '69 sessions appeared officially here, along with both sides of an unreleased 1968 attempt at a pop single. It's their most playful, casual record—Reed almost breaks into giggles a few times, even when he's singing about S&M.

Download: "Foggy Notion," "I Can't Stand It"

PEEL SLOWLY AND SEE

POLYDOR/CHRONICLES, 1995

★★★★



The original four albums, plus demos, murky live tapes and a few VU tracks; unfortunately, the scholarly

chronology makes the box less appealing for repeated listens. It's sort of inspiring that the Velvets were so awful at first—the wobbly, drum-less pre-Tucker-era rehearsal documented on the first of these five discs is not exactly the stuff of legend—but the messy bonuses don't explain much about how they made their stylistic leaps.

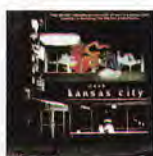
Download: "It's All Right (The Way That You Live)," "Ride Into the Sun"

BE CAREFUL

LIVE AT MAX'S KANSAS CITY

ATLANTIC, 1972

★★★



Reed quit the band in August 1970, near the end of a summer-long stint playing five nights a week at a New York club. His

last gig (with Yule's brother sitting in for new mama Tucker) was captured by Warhol hanger-on Brigid Polk on a portable cassette deck and edited into this murky-sounding, slightly weary album, expanded in 2004 to include everything Polk taped. You can tell they're a little bitter at not being famous, and they have a point.

Download: "New Age"

ANOTHER VIEW

POLYGRAM, 1986

★★★★



Barrel-scraping, yes. If only every band's barrel-scrapings ruled this hard. The last nine '68/'69-era leftovers in the

MGM vaults include three unfinished instrumental tracks, two takes of the wheezy viola showcase "Hey Mr. Rain," an early version of "Rock and Roll" and a couple of blatant throwaways. Amazingly, it's still a lot of fun—even when the songs aren't there, the Velvets' groove sense and perfectly abrasive guitar tone never leave them.

Download: "Guess I'm Falling in Love," "We're Gonna Have a Real Good Time Together"

BOOTLEG SERIES VOLUME I: THE QUINE TAPES

POLYDOR, 2001

★★★★



In the early '80s, Robert Quine played guitar in Reed's band, but in 1969, he was a young Velvets fanatic, taping a

series of their shows in San Francisco and St. Louis. This miniature three-disc box is a charming head-scratcher: Despite the band's reputation as proto-punks, they liked to kick back and noodle. Highlights include a twitchy 17-minute jam, "I'm Waiting for the Man" as a slow dirge and over an hour and a half of "Sister Ray" in three incarnations.

Download: "Sister Ray/Foggy Notion"

FOR FANS ONLY

SQUEEZE

POLYDOR, 1973

★★★



It's got the Velvet Underground name on it, but don't be fooled—Lou Reed's not on it, and neither are any other original

members. After the Reed-less group's 1972 U.K. tour, their manager sent everyone but Doug Yule home, leaving him to make this album of witless guitar boogie, backed by Deep Purple's drummer. Horrid, and deservedly long out of print.

Download: "Little Jack"

LIVE MCMXCIII

WARNER BROS., 1993

★★★★



The *White Light* lineup managed to table their hostilities long enough for a brief European reunion tour in 1993. When

they shut up and jam, they're as sharp as ever; when Cale warbles Nico's parts from the first album (she died in 1988 after a bicycle accident), it's at least fresh; when Reed mangles his old songs with fuck-you-all "experimental" phrasing, or treats the rest of the group like just another backing band, it's clear why they split again before they could reach America.

Download: "Hey Mr. Rain"

FINAL V.U. 1971-1973

CAPTAIN TRIP, 2001

★★★★



After Reed quit, Yule continued on for three years under the Velvet name. This four-disc set documents four

concerts from that time—two, from the *Loaded* tour, feature Tucker, and the rest of the lineups are Yule's Boston pals. They're not bad, if you think of them as the work of an energetic, V.U.-covering jam band; Yule went on to tour in Reed's group in 1974. But even he admits that using the name was pretty deceitful by the end.

Download: "Cool It Down"

FURTHER LISTENING

NICO CHELSEA GIRL

POLYGRAM, 1967

★★★★

Her first post-Velvets project is a chamber-pop record that heads in the chilly direction "All Tomorrow's Parties" suggested. Reed, Cale and Morrison provide some backup and half of the songs.

Download: "Chelsea Girls," "I'll Keep It With Mine"

LOU REED & JOHN CALE SONGS FOR DRELLA

SIRE, 1990

★★★★

Following Andy Warhol's death in 1987, Reed and Cale reunited for this spare song cycle about their mentor's life, their relationship with him and the aesthetics (and work ethic) they learned from him.

Download: "Small-town," "Style It Takes"

FURTHER READING

VICTOR BOCKRIS & GERARD MALANGA UP-TIGHT: THE VELVET UNDERGROUND STORY

COOPER SQUARE PRESS

★★★★

A 1983 oral history of the band and its entourage, revised after the reunion. Bockris (a biographer) and Malanga (a Warhol sycophant) concentrate on the period when the Velvets were practically a division of Warhol's Factory, capturing its art-crazy, druggy spirit.

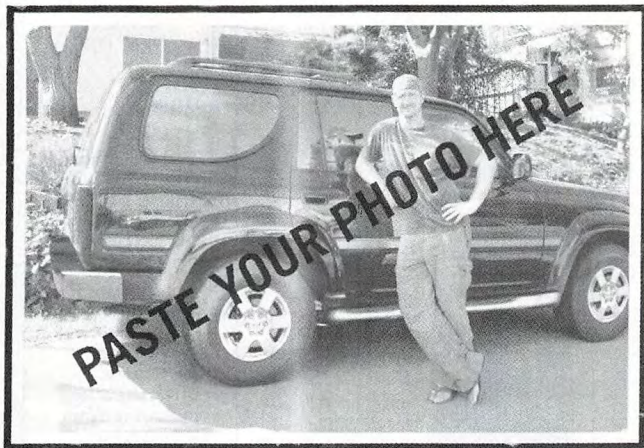
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Axl Rose, protecting his sensitive eyes from the blinding nighttime darkness.

GUNS ABLAZE

THE WORLD'S GREATEST (AND TARDIEST) HARD-ROCK BAND IS ONLY AN HOUR LATE. SO WHY ARE FANS SETTING STUFF ON FIRE?

GUNS N' ROSES

KROQ'S INLAND INVASION

HYUNDAI PAVILION, SAN BERNARDINO, CALIFORNIA

SEPTEMBER 23, 2006 ★★

A KINDLY FAMILY man seated nearby shares a secret: "My friend who works with Guns N' Roses just told me, 'If I text you and say EXIT, get out of here, because Axl is still in San Francisco.'" At 10 P.M., as scheduled, the lights go down. At 10:20, the kindly man leaves. At 10:25, the lights come back on. Water-bottle salvos begin to target the stage. At 10:45, bonfires appear on the back lawn. As in St. Louis in 1991, Vancouver in 2002, and on many other nights, a GN'R riot is around the corner. And at 10:50, none of this matters. Guns N' Roses are onstage, barely late at all.

What follows is a conservatively selected set: 75 percent from *Appetite for Destruction*, nothing from the two *Use Your Illusion* albums (released

15 years ago) that wasn't also on 2004's time-killing *Greatest Hits* and just four works-in-unending-progress from *Chinese Democracy*. But there is something extraordinary about the drama that can still attach to Axl Rose stroking his catalogue.

Twirling and sprinting up to the second-story backline, pouncing his nuclear falsetto into the classics and coming up winded only on the wordier new stuff, Rose does what he always did, just in shorter spurts; so virtually every other song is followed by a solo, jam or other pause. He never goes off script: thanking fans, naming the band, smirking that the album delays are due to downloading ("That's my story, and I'm sticking to it"). There is no sense that this show, his first in the L.A. area since 1992, is a particular homecoming. But he's clear-eyed, and as undeniable a rock

Axl: "Hey, new guitarist guy, you're pretty good."



legend now as he was before he began to whack the original band members.

It doesn't much matter that, when it comes to "new" material (check YouTube and you'll see that he's been performing "I.R.S." since 1999), "Madagascar" remains a weaker version of "Civil War." For frat funk with an unexpected heart of gold, "Better" is actually a worse version of "Locomotive," which descended from the beloved *Appetite* stripper tribute "Rocket Queen." And "The Blues" may remain a hit power ballad only in Rose's fever dreams, like "Estranged" was 15 years ago. Even some of the *Use Your Illusion* stuff gets tuned out by the dotting crowd of 30,000.

Lots of the folks here need Rose's pit stops. With nine bands over about eleven hours, Inland Invasion, sponsored by

L.A. radio powerhouse KROQ, has summoned multiple generations of fans to the nation's biggest amphitheater. At one point, a beery biker dad towing a preteen son gets into it with a bowl-smoking twentysomething. Guns N' Roses are about the last group to arrive in rock history who could connect such a throng.

GN'R's influence these days isn't particularly musical; Alice in Chains, who precede GN'R with a set featuring a new singer, the diffident William DuVall, in place of the dead Layne Staley, helped give contemporary metal its austere edge—and they're graced with a

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE
IT'S SO EASY
MR. BROWNSTONE
LIVE AND LET DIE
SWEET CHILD O' MINE
YOU COULD BE MINE
THE BLUES
OUT TA GET ME
NOVEMBER RAIN
BETTER
MY MICHELLE
I.R.S.
PATIENCE
ROCKET QUEEN
NIGHT RAIN
MADAGASCAR
PARADISE CITY

"OK, officer. I'll stand on one foot."



THERE IS STILL SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY ABOUT THE DRAMA THAT ATTACHES TO AXL ROSE.

cameo by Chester Bennington of Linkin Park. Axl's one collaborator is Sebastian Bach of *Gilmore Girls* (née Skid Row), a happy fossil. The new GN'R are a pop-savvy backing ensemble with skills rather than attitude, as they hint with a Stonesy instrumental-guitar duet that turns out to be Christina Aguilera's "Beautiful." The seven boys in the band must be getting to Rose, who at one point sings a snippet of Pink's "Get the Party Started."

Then again, when Avenged Sevenfold, who seem gleeful about opening for GN'R and talk onstage about the classic days of metal, close their set with pole dancers sucking at their crotches, it's a Guns tribute. No pop substitute has ever been found for the crazy community of the outdoor hard-rock festival. It's a world where sin is viewed as matter-of-factly as sun, where singers and listeners don't so much strive as bask. And for Rose, it's the only thing that can get him out of the studio and back into action. **ERIC WEISBARD**

ART ATTACK!

TRICKY UNDERGROUND WIZARDS SET THE VOLUME TO 10

TV ON THE RADIO

THE SHOWBOX, SEATTLE
OCTOBER 4, 2006 ★★★★★

TV ON THE RADIO specialize in reversals and denials. They're indie-rock heroes whose guitarist, Dave Sitek, has called indie rock "alienating, asinine, snobbish horseshit." They're fourth-fifths black, but currently superglued to the top of the lily-white college radio charts. And although they're Brooklyn trendsetters whose oblique lyrics about bad politics and tormented erotics are as serious as a stony glare, their singer Tunde Adebimpe used to work on *Celebrity Deathmatch*, they named a new album *Return to Cookie Mountain* and their tour T-shirts say "Me and This Little Duck ♥ TVOTR." They're pretty playful for music wonks.

They also used to betray their subtle, lushly layered songs with live shows that dissolved into awkward, fussy tedium. Watching them play was like watching strangers rearrange furniture. Not anymore. Tonight, they present themselves as an air-warpingly loud rock band whose set is only inspired by the music on *Cookie Mountain*. Sounding just like their records, Adebimpe tells *Blender*, "is always dangerous for us, because it can get really stale really quickly. So we try to keep it loose now."

Onstage, TVOTR's new signature sound is the blistering whine of overdriven guitar—it almost never

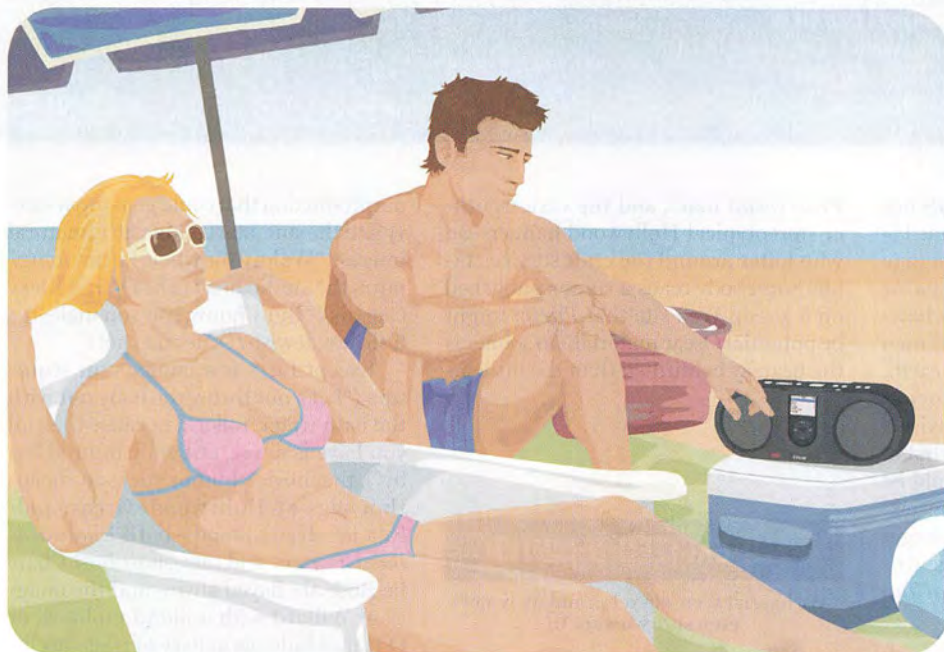
stops, even between songs. They've rearranged songs into bullheaded rockers that stomp and roll where they used to pitter-pat. Sitek sings along lustily for almost the entire set, although he's usually nowhere near a microphone. Raking a murky howl out of his Life Savers-striped guitar, he hovers at the back of the stage, near drummer Jaleel Bunton; on bass or keyboards, Gerard Smith spends the entire show with his back to the audience.

So the band's visual focus is its Abbott & Costello duo of frontmen: Kyp Malone is the short, stoic singer-guitarist with the huge Afro and huger beard; Adebimpe is the tall, skinny one who bounds all over, grandly gesticulating with his left arm and leaning backward to bellow choruses. They're two of the nimblest, most distinctive voices in rock, and they combine to sound, uncannily, like Peter Gabriel, the forefather of lushly layered chilly complexity—it's hard to imagine another group pulling off the cracked, yodeling harmony they nail on "Poppy."

That spectacularly weird but exquisite singing may explain why this odd little duck of a band inspires such devotion, and their unpreachy lefty politics don't hurt. The 1,100 grad schoolish Seattlites sing along with new songs like "Let the Devil In," and the highlight is a reworking of 2003's "Staring at the Sun," now revved up so high it's almost unrecognizable—which doesn't stop a stunning young woman from leaping onstage to pogo while lip-synching every word. That wouldn't have happened a few years ago, before TVOTR figured out how to harness the kind of brute force they avoid on record. But they've got plenty of room for one more incongruity. **DOUGLAS WOLK**



TV on the Radio: Not really sold on the importance of "looking" at the "audience."



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Tragically, Ricky Gervais never actually learned to read.



AN EVENING AT THE IMPROV

CHRISTOPHER GUEST'S SURPRISINGLY LIMP NEW COMEDY GOES AFTER FAKE OSCARS, WHILE THE ADAPTATION OF AN OLFACTORY-OBSSESSED BESTSELLER AIMS FOR A REAL ONE (By David Fear)

CHRISTOPHER GUEST IS not a traditional screen comedian: He does not tell jokes or engage in madcap high-concept hijinks or fall down staircases. As a filmmaker, however, he may be one of the funniest men alive and quite possibly not of this earth. How else to explain Guest's ability to coax from an elite squad of comic improvisers rich, consistently hilarious movies out of premises that, in lesser hands, could be one-joke bores—Dog show! Folk concert! Bad regional theater! It's easy to forget that he didn't actually direct the genre's Rosetta stone, 1984's *This Is Spinal Tap* (that'd be Rob Reiner).

Even a giant can stumble, however, and when he does, the thud can be resounding. **FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION** isn't a mockumentary in the manner of *Waiting for Guffman* (1996), *Best in Show* (2000) or *A Mighty Wind* (2003), and considering that Guest has already stretched the genre to its limits, maybe that's smart. The usual suspects—Harry Shearer, Fred Willard, Eugene Levy, Parker Posey, Catherine O'Hara—are present and accounted for, and the idea of the gang pissing on Hollywood's annual obsession with prestige screams potential, even if the subject matter is hardly unexplored terrain. But the limp farce turns out to be just a collection of musty Borscht Belt quips. A one-joke bore, basically.

A modest family drama entitled *Home for Purim* brings together a group of insecure actors, a confused director (played by Guest, with Sergei Eisenstein-meets-

Eraserhead hair), and the various other stereotypical Hollywood hangers-on who loiter around the craft services table. Somebody reads a rumor published on a gossip Web site that *Purim* might be potential Oscar material; no sooner is the hearsay confirmed than the little in-

die production that could goes topsy-turvy and the suits start taking an unnatural interest. "We love the whole Purim thing," purrs the studio head (*The Office*'s Ricky Gervais). "But y'know, can you make it a little less Jewish?" Cue rim shot!

Except for a few choice non sequiturs ("Let's not throw the baby out with the bath water, folks ... because then all you have is a wet, critically injured baby"), the movie's humor sticks to cheap-shot digs at Hollywood. Occasionally, a jab draws blood—both *Entertainment Tonight* and talk-show host Charlie Rose are flayed alive—and the images of Willard with a blond mohawk or O'Hara's hideous gallery of post-facelift grimaces are enough to draw appreciative chuckles. But Guest has set an incredibly high bar for ensemble goofiness over the years, and for once he seems unable to get anywhere near it himself. Apparently, Hell-Ay is a rapid, superficial place full of sad, pathetic poseurs—who knew? *For Your Consideration* is not a bad movie so much as a bland, toothless one, but for someone of Guest's caliber, that's tragedy enough.

Meanwhile, German director Tom Tykwer's lavish adaptation of Patrick Suskind's cult-hit turned bestseller **PERFUME: THE STORY OF A MURDERER** boasts many ingredients real-life Academy voters crave: pedigreed actors (Dustin Hoffman), stiff-upper-lip narration by a sonorous Brit (John Hurt) and dense set design that's the definition of Dickensian. Of course, these same voters may be dissuaded once

THE EXCITED-O-METER

We haven't seen 'em yet ... and we're not even sure we want to



VERY EXCITED

CHILDREN OF MEN

Alfonso Cuarón (*Y Tu Mamá También*) imagines a future in which the human race can no longer reproduce.

EXCITED-ISH

THE GOOD GERMAN

Versatile director Steven Soderbergh's B&W Berlin-based thriller has us wondering: Has someone been watching too much Turner Classic Movies lately?



NOT SO MUCH

ROCKY BALBOA

In which our marble-mouthed pugilist fights gout, arthritis and the indignities of diminished cultural relevancy.





Perfume:
"Gee, your hair
smells terrific."



It's just fun to type
Octopussy. Even if this
isn't from *Octopussy*.
Octopussy!

they see Hoffman as a French transvestite and the hero—though blessed with a superhuman sense of smell—is a stalker and serial killer. It's also a safe bet that many of the gray-haired biddies wouldn't have caught Tykwer's tribute to Manic Panic hair dye, *Run Lola Run* (1998), and thus won't appreciate what a huge step forward this is for him. Whether it reaps Oscar gold or not, *Perfume* is certainly one of the more sensual films you're likely to experience—you can practically smell every fragrance the young perfumer blends for the Parisian elite. And it takes a certain moxie to shoot the book's climactic public orgy with as much fidelity as the MPAA will allow, statuettes be damned.

Before the months of endless ceremonies dedicated to folks patting each other's backs raw, however, there's a holiday season to contend with, which is where MGM's **JAMES BOND ULTIMATE COLLECTION** comes in—you can now buy your loved ones Bond films in sets ... *box* sets. (Cue John Barry score.) However, rather than going the chronological route, the studio is releasing randomly grouped titles in four volumes. Coinciding with the release of Daniel Craig's debut as the superspy in *Casino Royale*, the two-disc editions of the earlier Bond films might help you wash the taste of the new one out of your mouth or make you appreciate the change from Cold War hero to a contemporary badass. Either way, the chance to own most of the vaunted franchise is its own reward.

BLENDER APPROVED

The best movies and DVDs of the past months



FAST FOOD NATION
Muckraking politics, tight ensemble acting and yes, we would like fries with that.



THE KIDS IN THE HALL MEGASET
Every episode ever of the Canadian sketch geniuses' series, guaranteed to crush your head.

MUSIC DVDS

That's right—the concert's free 'cause it's underwritten by Satan.



KIEFER MADNESS

CTU'S MOST BADASS SUPERAGENT TRADES HIS BERETTA FOR BOURBON AND SPENDS HIS CHRISTMAS VACATION MANAGING A ROCK BAND

(By Lauren Harris)

ROCCO DELUCA AND THE BURDEN

I TRUST YOU TO KILL ME (MOTION PICTURE GROUP)

★★★

Since there's seemingly little that superagent Jack Bauer cannot accomplish, he decided to start his own record label. Lacking both a stable of talent and the required business acumen, actor Kiefer Sutherland meets Rocco Deluca and the Burden, an L.A. blues-rock quartet given to Dave Matthews–like noodling, and decides, for reasons never made clear, to be their tour manager for two weeks, trailing lost phones, handling publicity and drunkenly brutalizing holiday decorations. Sutherland's antics provide the comic relief, while his fierce, if inexplicable, dedication drives him to have the band's album title (and the name of this flick, in a savvy marketing turn) tattooed on his arm. In Icelandic. The usually private Sutherland gamely exploits his celebrity, drumming up attendance at one night's show and eating the door price. Despite this, Sutherland's stardust never quite rubs off on the band, doomed to fade into oblivion once its star benefactor gets back to his day job of saving the world.

THE BEST OF THE REST

MISSION OF BURMA
NOT A PHOTOGRAPH:
THE MISSION OF
BURMA STORY
(ELEMENT PRODUCTIONS)

★★★
Chronicling a rare case in which a band's reunion commercially and perhaps even critically surpasses its first incarnation, this doc tells the story of Boston's Mission of Burma's unlikely resurgence with archival footage, recent performances and interviews with the band members, their families and their acolytes.

EAGLES OF DEATH METAL
DVD BY SEXY
(SPITFIRE MEDIA)

★★★★
If side projects are supposed to be fun-filled larks, then this freewheeling, inside-joke-laden, in-the-studio doc chronicling the making of EODM's second album leaves little question as to why Queens of the Stone Age frontman Josh Homme gladly mans the drums for his pal Jesse "The Devil" Hughes's campy desert-rock outfit.

LEONARD COHEN
I'M YOUR MAN
(LIONSGATE)

★★★★
While beloved singer-songwriter Leonard Cohen's music is known worldwide, his personal life has long been the subject of speculation. This feature-length portrait succeeds in sharing intimate details from the man himself. Inventive reworkings of his songs by super-fans U2, Beth Orton, Rufus Wainwright and others are interspersed between interviews.



LAST
GOOD MOVIE
YOU SAW?

LES CLAYPOOL
PRIMUS

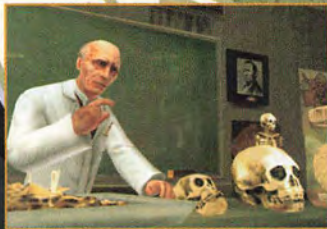
"*Barnyard*. I took my kids to see it because I'm actually a singing horse in that. My only problem was that the male cows had udders. I would've bought it, but at the end they showed a bull, which was really confusing, so I guess they were transgender cattle."

ROCKSTAR GAMES
PRESENTS

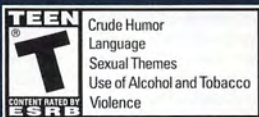
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PlayStation®2



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Wasn't this
dude in Static-X?



NO STRINGS ATTACHED

IN THE GRAND TRADITION OF LED ZEPPELIN II, A ROCK SEQUEL THAT SURPASSES THE ORIGINAL (By Line Goad)

GUITAR HERO II

RED OCTANE, PS2

★★★★

BECOMING A VIRTUAL Yngwie is now as easy as choosing a semi-hit metal tune and banging buttons on a plastic guitar-shaped controller as notes float by onscreen—guitaraoke, if you will. Play the songs note-perfect and you'll unlock more selections, as well as additional venues to play in, just like in the original *Guitar Hero*. This time around, most of the 60-plus tracks still rely on soundalike artists to emulate Vince Neil croaking "Shout at the Devil," but there are also original recordings from bands like Primus... hey, wait, come back!

The extras set this sequel apart from the

AN AX TO
GRIND!

previous incarnation: Quality shredding—even fake quality shredding—requires diligent rehearsal, and *Guitar Hero II* comes with a mode that lets you do just that. Pick any unlocked song and practice any part of it at one of three speeds. In addition to *mano a mano* guitar competitions, two players can kick off impromptu jam sessions in the improved multiplayer mode—one takes the lead, and the other can provide rhythm or bass. Unlike most games, the graphics here don't matter much and there's no complex control scheme or strategy to master—the genius of *Guitar Hero*

lies in the visceral experience that comes from strapping on a hunk of plastic and, within minutes, turning your basement into Madison Square Garden.

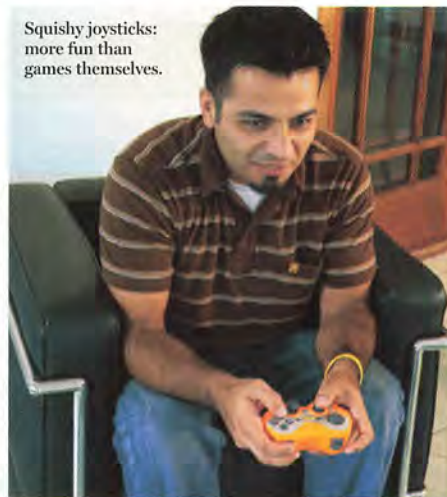
GIZMO OF THE MONTH

NERF WIRELESS CONTROLLER

Hurl your joystick in frustration with minimal fear of grievous bodily harm

Although video games are supposed to be safe alternatives to dangerous roughhousing, accidents can happen—the foam-encased NERF controller for PlayStation 2 (\$29.99) reduces that risk. The game pad comes in red, black, blue or orange and is made to withstand "squeezing, throwing, twisting and spiking." That means you can hypothetically fling the controller after missing a touchdown pass without cracking the plasma TV screen or living-room window (please, don't actually try this at home).

Squishy joysticks:
more fun than
games themselves.



CALL OF DUTY 3

ACTIVISION, 360, PS3, PS2, XBOX, WII

★★★★

The basic concept of this venerable WWII first-person shooter—leading Allied troops against the goose-stepping forces of the Third Reich—hasn't changed, but this time the emphasis is on close-quarters fire-fights, where our boys can blast away enemy cover. If things get too hot, a little melee knife combat, another new twist, may be the only way to drive the point home, preferably right into the skull of an SS trooper.

RAINBOW SIX: VEGAS

UBISOFT, 360, PS3, PC

★★★★

The overpriced hotels, schlocky magic acts and college-fund-depleting blackjack tables are enough to make any Vegas visitor cranky, but you'd need to be having a *really* bad time to take the entire city hostage. When baddies threaten treasured national landmarks like the Paris, it's a job for America's favorite anti-terrorist squad, Rainbow Six. This game requires an OCD-like dedication to mission planning, issuing commands and plenty of repeat play-throughs to nail the bad guys before they nail your computer-controlled teammates.

FORZA MOTORSPORT 2

MICROSOFT, 360

★★★★

Short of a midlife crisis and a big year-end bonus, the only way most of us are going to drive a Ferrari or Lamborghini at top speed is in this ultra-realistic →


FORZA MOTORSPORT 2

SINGSTAR ROCKS!

WORLD OF WARCRAFT: THE BURNING CRUSADE

DEAD OR ALIVE XTREME 2

racingsim. High-performance cars aren't easy to operate, so pay attention to the Xbox 360's rumbling controller, which lets you feel the ground, or else the realistic damage modeling will leave you with a pretty banged-up ride.

WORLD OF WARCRAFT: THE BURNING CRUSADE

BLIZZARD, PC

★★★★

After the CrackBerry, this online fantasy time-suck is the biggest addiction of modern geeks. The pushers at Blizzard have released a new and improved drug, a *World of Warcraft* extension that introduces two new races, new expansive playing fields and flying critters that can transport players from here to there in a heartbeat. If loving orcs and dragons is wrong, you won't want to be right.

SINGSTAR ROCKS!

SCEA, PS2

★★★

Toss back a few Jell-O shots and turn your living room into a karaoke

bar with a catch: Everyone gets graded on their singing ability. Players put on their best *American Idol* performance using a microphone attachment, and the game gives scores based on the singer's pitch. That means the truly tone-deaf don't have a chance, but soulless shower hacks can easily rack up points.

DEAD OR ALIVE XTREME 2

TECMO, 360

★★★

Though the premise of this pseudo sports game is to play beach volleyball (and other highbrow endeavors like butt battle and tug-of-war), the main event is watching pixelated buxom babes parade around in dozens of different bikinis, preening for the virtual cameras. Speaking of cameras, this sleazy sequel lets you shoot your own pictorials and then sit back and watch them over and over again. The game's not really much more than creepy eye candy, but then again, this is as close to a real-life woman as some gamers are gonna get.



THIS MONTH, TOM MEIGHAN, LEAD SINGER OF BRITPOPSTERS KASABIAN, LETS HIS DWEEB FLAG FLY

LAST GOOD GAME PLAYED

Jaws. Oh, my god, when you go around chomping people, it's unbelievable, mate. It's incredible. What a fucking masterful idea that is, innit?

FAVORITE CLASSIC GAME

It's got to be *Super Mario Brothers 3*, without a doubt. You know, when you got the fox tail and you could fly? I might go out and buy an original Nintendo just to play it. Games are like music, man: You can't beat the classics, they'll stick around forever. But I think nowadays we've got it too good, ain't we?

GAMING DRUG OF CHOICE

Uh, weed. You want to be laid-back, don't you? You want to float with it. You want a bag of potato chips and a Coke or whatever. Jesus Christ, you don't want to do coke and play Nintendo or whatever—it's no good for you, mate. It'd be horrible.

POST-SHOW PASTIME: GAMES OR GROUPIES?

A good game, any day. *Pro Evolution Soccer* is the most incredible soccer game ever made. I think it's called *Winning Eleven* in America. That'd get my attention any day.

GEEKIEST BAND MEMBER

Our drummer, Ian. He's so drawn into it, he's great at it. He's playing that army game, what's it called? *Call of Duty*. I ain't into it, but he gets all emotional. He spends hours with it. I'm probably the worst with those kinds of games—I don't concentrate enough.

A KASABIAN GAME WOULD LOOK LIKE...

There'd be a lot of ninja swords and you'd have to save the princess from the most evil drug baron in the world, a little guy who doesn't give a fuck.

GABE SORIA

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SHE'S KNOWN AS THE SWEET GIRL FROM *AMERICAN IDOL*. BUT AFTER YOU HEAR ABOUT THE PURPLE VOMIT AND THE EXES SHE'S MISTREATED, YOU'LL WONDER ...

By Rob Tannenbaum
Photograph by Michael Sharkey

Who Does Katharine McPhee Think She Is?

SO, KATHARINE, WHAT DID YOU DRAW FOR YOUR SELF-PORTRAIT?

It's a bunch of hearts. On this *American Idol* tour, I'm always bored, because it's such long hours. And I always end up drawing hearts on myself—on my hands or my palm. It's really soothing. Or I'll write "I ♥ You" on my middle three fingers. Then I'll walk around, and if I feel like saying "I love you" to somebody, I'll just hold up my hand.

YOU SHOW THE FINGERS TO PEOPLE YOU KNOW, OR TO STRANGERS?

People I know, but people who wouldn't feel comfortable if I said, "I love you." It probably weirds out some men. Because they're like, "She loves me?"

SO WHY DO YOU GET BORED ON TOUR? IS IT BECAUSE YOU ONLY SING FOR ABOUT 30 MINUTES A NIGHT?

People always ask us, "Aren't you guys just having so much fun?" And we're like, [half-hearted] "Yeah." But the good outweighs the bad. Even if I think to myself, "Oh, man, I gotta sing 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow' again?" I see the little faces smiling at me and they're all excited, so it becomes new to me.

WHAT PERSONAL HABIT DO YOU HAVE THAT OTHER PEOPLE FIND ANNOYING?

[Laughs] I can be very childlike. If I'm in a silly mood, I talk in this baby voice.

LET'S HEAR THE BABY VOICE.

No!

C'MON! LET'S HEAR IT.

I talk to the girls when we're doing hair and makeup: [In baby voice] "Oh, baby, come on. I love you, lover." Just stupid shit like that. Paris Bennett was upset because someone had eaten her crab cakes, and I was like, "Oh, baby, don't worry. I'll make you a sandwich, little munchkin."

WOW. THAT IS ANNOYING.

Actually, people think it's funny. I do it to have a good time, to make fun of life. But if I do it too much I start to annoy myself.

EVER BEEN FIRED FROM A JOB?

No, I was a hostess, a catering manager, I worked in retail, I was a nanny for two different families. And I was a good nanny.

DID YOU EVER WANT TO SMACK THE KIDS?

Oh, sure. [Laughs] Of course. They always get out of line.

WHO WERE YOU IN A PREVIOUS LIFE?

The first thing that comes to mind is a psychiatrist or a therapist. I think an entertainer's job is to heal. That's what artists do, and what doctors do too.

HAVE YOU EVER SEEN A THERAPIST?

Yeah! I've seen many therapists. I started when I was 17, and I still do. Self-help, personal growth, pain, family struggles—it never goes away.

WHAT ARE YOU LIKE WHEN YOU'RE DRUNK?

I'm silly times, like, a hundred. Other than a few bad nights in college, I don't really get out of control. Nobody likes to barf. To me, that's not fun.

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU BARFED?

I don't think people want to read that. [Laughs] I'm supposed to be the sweet all-American girl from *American Idol*.

BUT IS THAT REALLY WHO YOU ARE?

I'm a sweet girl. But I definitely have edges, and I like to have fun. OK, here's the story: I went to The Boston Conservatory, this really strict performing-arts school, and a friend and I decided one night that it was time to rebel. So we got pad Thai and these really cheap jugs of red wine. I just remember barfing all night long. I would wake up and I would already have barfed, and I didn't even know I was barfing. And to top it off, everything was just bright purple. Like, the pad Thai noodles were purple.

OK, WE'VE HEARD ENOUGH NOW. WHAT DO PEOPLE WHO DON'T LIKE YOU SAY ABOUT YOU?

Non-fans say I'm overly confident or stuck-up. Or they say I'm a snob, because during *Idol* I would talk back to the judges. Trust me, I could've said a lot worse things. My dad always says, "You got a mouth on ya!"

ARE YOU A GOOD GIRL OR A BAD GIRL?

Both. I'm a big flirt. It doesn't get me into trouble—well, maybe it does sometimes. But yeah, I just love men.

HOW MANY HEARTS HAVE YOU BROKEN?

Many. Jose. Definitely Alex: I done him wrong. Stepped on his heart and went on with another boyfriend. Alex, if you're reading this, I'm sorry.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE WRITTEN ON YOUR GRAVESTONE?

Here's the first thing that comes to mind: "A loved mother." [She starts to cry] That makes me tear up. I'm young and I have this real wild spirit, I wanna run around and be free and have this boyfriend and that boyfriend. But when it all comes down to it, I really just want that foundation and that peace, and a baby on my arm. [BLUNDER]



Nothing quite says "we're pals"
like a set of tandem tees.





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3. Iron fabric lightly to remove moisture
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6. Press firmly on decal with heated iron for 20-30 seconds, ironing every part of the image (use caution)
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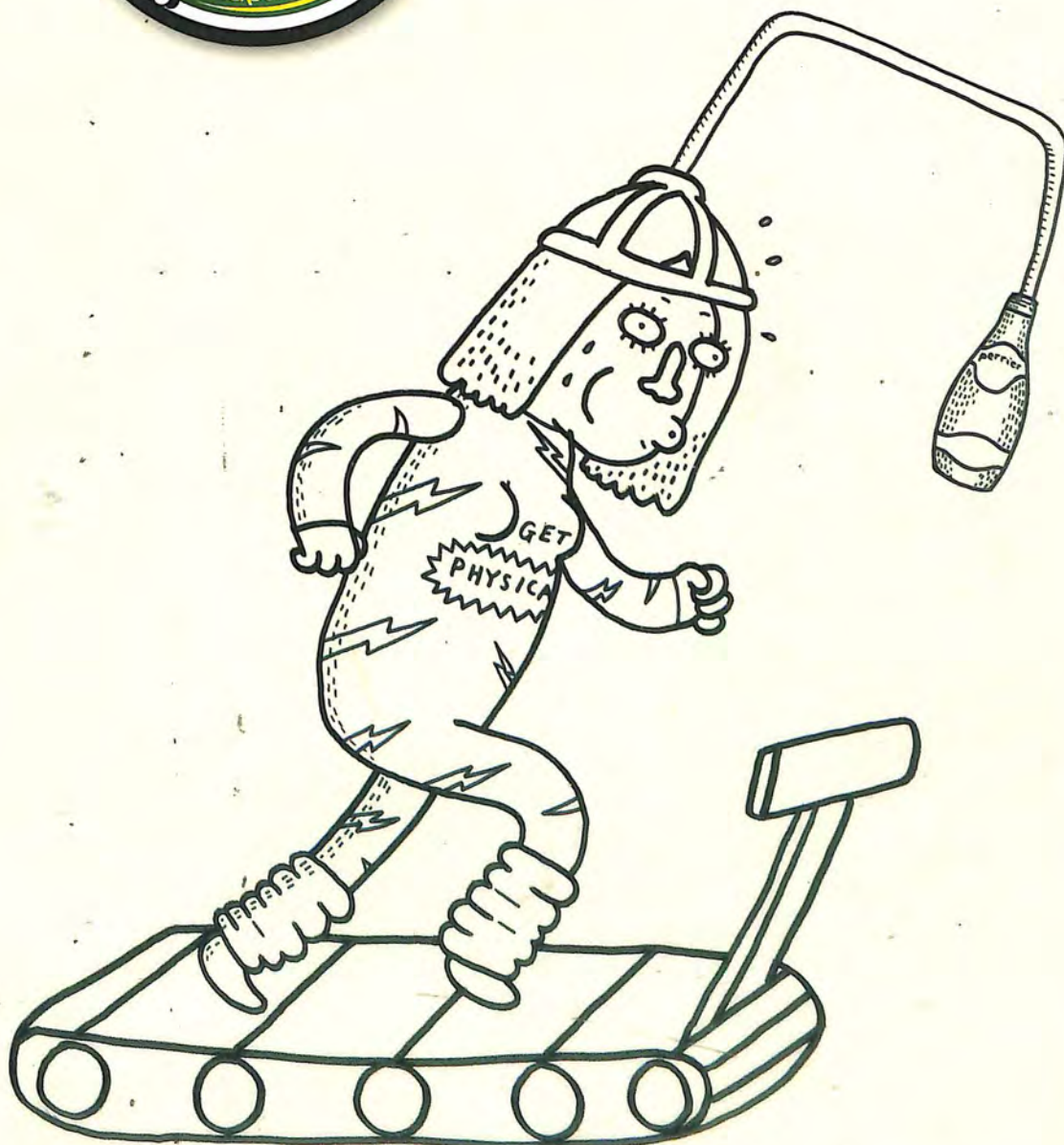
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